



Khama in London (1895)

KHAMA

The Great African Chief

BY

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE BACKGROUND	5
II. THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE	10
III. SEKHOME—THE SORCERER CHIEF	13
IV. THE BIRTH OF KHAMA	16
V. "THE LIGHT THAT LIGHTENED"	20
VI. LANTERN-BEARERS	24
VII. FOES OF THE DESERT	28
VIII. FOES OF THE HOUSEHOLD	33
IX. MACHENG—THE WICKED UNCLE	43
X. KHAMA BECOMES CHIEF	50
XI. BLACK CHECKMATES WHITE	55
XII. THE RETURN OF SEKHOME	61
XIII. THE MIGHT OF THE MEEK	64
XIV. "THE BLACK MAN'S BURDEN"	69
XV. ENTER—THE BRITISH FLAG	78
XVI. KHAMA REMOVES HIS TOWN	81
XVII. KHAMA VISITS ENGLAND	87
XVIII. RINDERPEST AND DRINK	91
XIX. REMOVAL TO SEBOWE	97
XX. "I WAS EVER A FIGHTER, SO . . ."	105
POSTSCRIPT	110
BIBLIOGRAPHY	112

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

MAP OF SOUTH AFRICA	page 2 of cover
KHAMA IN LONDON (1895)	Frontispiece
KHAMA AND HIS HEAD-MEN (ABOUT THE YEAR 1882)	facing page 24
THE SANDY ROAD LEADING TO LAKE NGAMI	25
SEBOWE, THE CHIEF'S TOWN	54
A SUNDAY SERVICE IN THE PLACE OF THE TRIBAL ASSEMBLY	55
KHAMA AT A HARVEST THANKSGIVING	80
AFTER FIFTY YEARS' RULE	81

FOREWORD

"The worst kind of religion is no religion at all, and these men, living in ease and luxury, indulging themselves in the amusement of going without a religion, may be thankful that they live in lands where the gospel they neglect has tamed the beastliness and ferocity of the men who, but for Christianity, might long ago have eaten their carcases like the South Sea Islanders, or cut off their heads, and tanned their hides, like the monsters of the French Revolution. When the microscopic search of scepticism, which has hunted the heavens and sounded the seas to disprove the existence of a Creator, has turned its attention to human society, and has found a place on this planet ten miles square, where a decent man may live in decency, comfort, and security, supporting and educating his children unspoiled and unpolluted—a place where age is reverenced, infancy protected, manhood respected, womanhood honoured, and human life held in due regard—when sceptics can find such a place ten miles square on this globe, where the gospel has not gone, and cleared the way and laid the foundations and made decency and security possible, it will then be in order for the sceptical literati to move thither and ventilate their views. So long as these men are dependent upon the religion which they discard for every privilege they enjoy, they may well hesitate a little before they seek to rob the Christian of his hope, and humanity of faith in that Saviour who alone has given to man that hope of life eternal which makes life tolerable and society possible, and robs death of its terrors and the grave of its gloom."—

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

KHAMMA

Chapter One

THE BACKGROUND

“The evolutionist wants æons for his process. The Missionary can do with less. The tremendous chasm between fetishism and Christianity is seen to be passed at a single bound in the lifetime of an individual.”

DR. STEWART, OF LOVEDALE.

DAZ doubled the Cape of Good Hope in 1486, but for more than three centuries after, South Africa kept her dark secrets. A few hardy venturers crept from time to time round the coast ; here and there they established a fort or a trading station, and came back with incredible tales of great mountains, and vast deserts inhabited by naked and savage men. But so hopeless seemed the task of opening up the country that even towards the middle of the nineteenth century, Moffat the Missionary, himself a pioneer explorer, declared that it would long remain the least explored portion of the earth. But, when he was in England, in 1839, he met David Livingstone, who was then waiting for an appointment to China. Livingstone listened to Moffat's story and said “Would I do for Africa ?” “I believe you would,” was Moffat's reply, “if you

Khama

would go to the unoccupied ground—to the vast plain to the north, where I have sometimes seen in the morning sun the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary has ever been."

"I will go," said Livingstone; and he went.

So the veil of mystery was lifted, and South Africa was slowly revealed in all her beauty and terror.

But how recent it all is! Within the lifetime of living men, what æons of evolution have been skipped, what centuries of strife and triumph have been compressed!

When we British talk of our History, we think of more or less unverifiable legends of matters happening more than a thousand years ago. It all happened in another world, a distant age, that seems strangely foreign to-day.

But how would the summer trippers to "Tintagel by the Cornish sea" feel if suddenly round the corner of a cliff they met one of Arthur's knights? Or what would the withy gatherers on Athelney say if amongst the reeds they stumbled on a thane of Alfred, still bearing scars from his fight with the Danes. Yet something like that is still possible in South African history. The ink is still wet on many of its pages, and wounds are unhealed from many of its wars. Away in sleepy dorps you may still meet men who saw Livingstone, and old women who nursed Moffat's children. There are grizzled old warriors basking in the sun whose eyes will flash at the name of Cetewayo and

The Background

Bunu, and whose tales of terror are the epic of their race—tales of the Zulu “ox-skull,” carrying death and devastation across the highlands, of the “smelling out” by Pondo witch-doctors, of the devilish orgies of Lobengula and Chaaka. When you stand in the market-place of Bulawayo, and see where Lobengula’s hut stood ; when from the lips of living men you hear the records, and on their scarred bodies see the marks, you touch the real romance. History lives before your eyes.

To-day the railway runs across the wastes, the motor-car bumps over the sandy drifts, and the sluicing stamp-heads roar where the hyenas lurked. But History speaks in the half-told tales round the outspan fires at night.

Rudyard Kipling, in a characteristic poem, gives a grim picture of South Africa. He declares that “half her land is dead with drouth, and half is red with battle.” There are “locusts on the greening sward and murrain on the cattle.” But, he adds—

her Pagan beauty drew
Christian gentlemen a few,
Hotly to attend her.”

And though “she filled their mouths with dust, and their bones with fever,” still they were held by her strange lure, and “returned for orders.”

“Pagan beauty” may make good poetry, but in cold prose and actual fact it is apt to look very ugly.

Khama

The brave old voortrekkers and early settlers who in the middle years of the last century pushed northward across the dreary wastes of Namaqualand and the Great Thirst Land of the Kalahari, outspanning by the infrequent wells, which they sometimes found to be poisoned by Hottentots ; hearing at night the roar of lions, or the whistle of little arrows shot by invisible Bushmen—these men saw more Paganism than Beauty in it all. The hardy old hunter, as he fills his pipe by the fire at night, will tell with a grim smile why the Magaliesburg is so famous and fertile for tobacco. Believe him, if you will, but he says that the raids of Moselekatsi and Lobengula strewed the veld with the bodies of their victims. Whole tribes were “eaten up” ; women and children were flung into the flaming huts of their blazing stads. It was their impalpable dust, scattered by the winds, that gave fertility to the land and flavour to the tobacco ! “Her Pagan beauty !”

And the men who, for no lure of adventure and no quest of gold, went northward, fighting wild beasts, taming wilder men ; to live in their kraals, to dare their treachery, to dispel their ignorance, and bring Light to those who sat in Darkness—these “Christian gentlemen a few” were constrained and drawn by the Pagan horror, the savage cruelty, the utter degradation of the peoples, to plumb and cleanse the very depths of human devilment.

Against that background of unmitigated

The Background

savagery stands out the figure of a living man, a Christian gentleman. Son of a crafty and cruel sorcerer, with the blood of generations of Paganism in his veins, Khama, chief of the Bamangwato, has for fifty years ruled his people with unwavering courage and inflexible justice, and—here is the miracle—with the Christian ideals.

BECHUANALAND lies between the Orange River on the south and the Zambesi on the north, a narrow strip of country about 1,000 miles from north to south, and with an average breadth of 300 miles from east to west. The southern portion is called British Bechuanaland, having been proclaimed a Crown Colony in 1885. The northern and larger portion is the Bechuanaland Protectorate, in area about 275,000 square miles, over five times the area of England and Wales.

Away to the west stretches the Kalahari Desert, where, as Mark Twain once said, "the sheep have stones to eat, and thorns to pick their teeth with." The Bechuana people are divided into various tribes, each retaining some of the ancient totemic names and customs, ruled by hereditary chiefs, under the paternal sovereignty of Britain. The chiefs have almost despotic power so far as tribal customs and laws are concerned. Crimes and laws affecting white men are dealt with by British magistrates. The three principal tribes in the Protectorate are the Bakwena, the Bangwaketse, and the Bamangwato. Originally one tribe, they have split up under separate chiefs, and hived off.

Fugitives, and fragments of other clans have from time to time been absorbed into one or other of these tribes.

The name Ba-Ngwato, that is, children of

The Land and the People

Ngwato, came from one of their earlier chiefs. Its origin is curious. "Ngwato" means "a poor piece of beef," and tradition says that this was the sinister gift made to Ngwato's mother by her ironical husband when she was childless. But when, later, she bore a son, she named him Ngwato—or "Contempt"—as a subtle reprisal and proud reminder to her contemptuous husband.

The tribal totem is the duiker antelope, but with the African tribes the totem is now little more than a name and a memory, just as the lion is to England, or the eagle to Germany.

Khama's father to the day of his death venerated the totem, and would never step over a mat of duiker skins. Khama openly eats a duiker steak, to show his emancipation from the ancient taboo.

Khama stands so utterly apart from his ancestry, and has so completely broken "his birth's invidious bar," that some have declared that he owes nothing to heredity. He comes from a long line of polygamous and savage chiefs, though the records of his Royal House are mercifully hidden in kindly oblivion. The tribal traditions run back to Masilo, who lived some three hundred years ago, and then—

"Sultan after Sultan, with his pomp,
Abode his little hour or two, and went his way,"

leaving behind him records of barbaric prowess and memories of fear, tales to be told by the old men round the camp-fires—memories which slowly faded as the fortunes of the tribe ebbed and flowed.

Khama

One name still stands out amongst these dim traditions, cherished and reverenced—Khari, the son of Khama I. “Brave in battle, wise in counsel, and kind to his vassals, Khari was all that the Bechuanas desire their chief to be, and under his sway the tribe grew strong, exacting tribute from the Makalaka and other weaker peoples in the country round.”

But the lust of conquest was his undoing. He led the flower of his tribe against the Mashona, who by superior tactics and savage strategy almost annihilated the Bamangwato army. The chief and his head-men were “eaten up,” and the tribe nearly wiped out. Thus weakened, the Bamangwato were at the mercy of their other foes. Down swept Sebetuane with the Makololo, and Moselekatsi with the Matebele, like vultures upon a wounded antelope.

But slowly the scattered people gathered together again. Their chief was dead, but he had left three sons, Khama II, Macheng, and Sekhome Kgari.

Sekhome was the oldest, but as his mother was not the chief wife of Khari, he was third in rank, and Khama II. became chief. Nothing daunted, Sekhome, who was a prisoner in the hands of the Matebele, escaped, and by his scheming got Khama II. put to death by the head-men of the tribe. Macheng, then a child, was saved by the flight of his mother to the Bakwena, where for a time he was protected by Sechele, the paramount chief of the Bechuana.

SO Sekhome sat in the “khotla” and ruled as chief.

But his rule was precarious and his power limited. Every year the warriors of Moselekatsi swept down from the Matebele country, demanding “tribute,” collecting cattle, destroying crops, and driving men and women to seek refuge in the hills. At length “the worm turned.” One day a party of despairing Bamangwato were watching, from their caves of refuge, the Matebele, on the plains below, driving off their herds, when a young warrior, whose name is now forgotten, spoke. Said he, “Bamangwato ! Let us die to-day. Have we not been dying the death of women for years ? To-day let us die like men ! Have we not seen our wives, our sisters, and our daughters led away by our enemies, our infants thrown into the air and caught upon the point of Matebele spears ? This is worse than death. Let us fight these destroyers of our people, and die like men ! ” With the abandonment of despair, and in the fury and bitterness of remembered wrongs, they fought, and to their own amazement as much as the chagrin of the Matebele, they won. They recovered their cattle and drove off the invaders.

How like a story from the Book of Judges it all is !

When, later, Moselekatsi, sent forty men to

Khama

the Town of the Bamangwato with a coldly polite request for "tribute," Sekhoma's answer was as daring as it was heathenish. He killed the lot, and so pledged himself and his tribe to independence.

Thus Sekhoma "dug himself in" as Chief of the Bamangwato, and seated himself in the throne of his fathers. It was a difficult position, and called for qualities of courage, cunning, and strength. Although but a generation has passed since these things happened, it is difficult to make people realise to-day the meaning of savage rule. Its outstanding feature was sheer devilish cruelty, absolute despotism. The chief possessed complete and unrestrained power of life and death over all his subjects.

Chaka, the Zulu chief, whose name still lives in memories of terror, would kill people for the merest trifle. If a man sneezed in his presence, Chaka would immediately order him to be killed. On one occasion he killed off all the old men of a kraal, saying that they were of no use, and only consumed food that was needed for his soldiers. At the death of his mother, he ordered the death of every mother in Zululand, and was only appeased when some seven thousand were murdered. Fiendish and indescribable were some of the tortures and punishments inflicted by Dingaan, Cetewayo, Lobengula, and Bunu.

Sekhoma apparently did not distinguish himself in the same way, for the Bechuana were not so notorious as the Zulu and the Matebele for

Sekhome—the Sorcerer Chief

cruelty. But that was the tradition and the atmosphere in which he exercised his rule. There is something almost pathetic in the figure of this desperate man, clinging to a chieftainship he had usurped, and entrenching himself behind the crumbling ramparts of a dynasty of doom. Surrounded by hostile tribes, eager and ready to "eat him up"; threatened by inner intrigues; holding almost the last outpost of heathenism and primitive savagery in South Africa; facing the slowly advancing tide of civilization, which was inevitably to undermine the tribal customs and finally demolish the bases of tribal authority; and all the while aware that his brother Macheng, the rightful heir, might any day return from exile and claim his position; one cannot forbear to temper judgment with pity.

But Sekhome was a remarkable man, cunning, alert, fearless, with the energy and wisdom of his great father Khari. He was a heathen to the *n*th degree, a famous "rain-maker" and sorcerer, and steeped in all the superstitions and customs of his race. Mackenzie says he had twelve wives; another authority declares that "the number of his wives and concubines was unlimited." He probably did not know nor care how many children he had. The only one who mattered was his heir, the son of his "first" or "great" wife.

THE determination of the date of Khama's birth is an interesting and difficult problem. A modern astrologer would find his "horoscope" somewhat baffling. There was, of course, no registration of births in a native kraal, and a Kaffir could only guess his exact age to within a few years by associating his birth with some outstanding event in the history of the tribe. The Rev. Edwin Lloyd, in his book, "Three Great African Chiefs" (to which this little record is indebted for many facts), seems to think that he settled the problem of Khama's age by the discovery of the register of his baptism, given on page 26. But more recent information seems to be more conclusive. The Rev. Haydon Lewis, at present Khama's missionary in Serowe, has discovered an old man called Mokgami, who is the only remaining member of Khama's original regiment, which was called the Mafholosa. Mokgami declares that he is two years younger than Khama, and that they were born when the Matebele were in the country. Mr. Lewis has discussed this statement with Khama himself, who says that the Matebele had passed north before he was born, but that Sekhoma had been threatened by their invasion, and had sent all his women and children away to the Makgadikgadi Flats till the danger was

The Birth of Khama

past. It was, he says, during this period that he was born.

By a process of inductive reasoning, and a combination of the methods of Euclid and Sherlock Holmes, Mr. Lewis arrives at a definite conclusion. The historic removal of the Matebele from Natal to Matebeleland, under Moselekatzzi, took place in 1827. This is the date given in the Modern Cyclopaedia, Vol. V., page 433. This was the "blast of the terrible ones," which led to the flight of Sekhome's women, and their long residence at the Flats. Khama agrees that he is two years older than Mokgami, and that when his mother returned with the other refugees to Patji (then the chief's town), he was between two and three years old. That return took place in 1830. It would thus seem conclusive that Khama was born in 1827-8, and he is now (1922) just over ninety-four.

His mother was Keamogetse, and she was the "first" wife of Sekhome Kgari, Khama's father. She was born at Kanye among the Banwaketse, and was the daughter of Segkotlo, a Monwato. She gave birth to Khama at Dino-kanen, a place of hiding among the Makgadikgadi Flats, away out in the desert to the N.W. of Serowe, the present capital. Keamogetse died at the Bottele River in 1875, the year when Khama actually took over the chieftainship, though he had been recognized as chief in 1872.

Every man must be judged against the background of his ancestry and his contemporaries.

Khama

Look at the ancestral inheritance of this man, and then talk of Determinism ! True, you can trace some of the secrets of his strength. The hardy courage, the inflexible will, the instinct for leadership, the quick intuition and almost uncanny insight into human nature, together with a certain native skill in tribal diplomacy ; all these he drew from his forbears. But these are not the qualities by which Khama will be remembered in history as one of the greatest of native chiefs.

By all the laws of precedent and all the principles of eugenics, he ought to have become a super-savage, a scheming, relentless, black butcher, in a red blanket, and, had he done so, ere this, his name would have been blotted out of history and his tribe would have passed into oblivion before the decimations of war, famine, pestilence, and the civilization of "Cape Smoke." But by some magic alchemy the entail has been broken, and a character drawn from such springs has been for fifty years as a Well of Life in the Deserts of the Great Thirst Land. From what ancestors did he draw that strange dignity, that perplexing rectitude, which have made his name respected alike by black and white, by heathen and Christian, by trader, hunter, soldier, and missionary ?

The Bantus are a mixed people, and there are signs of a considerable mixture with the Galla and Arab races of North Africa. Colonel Lugard declares that the Bantu chiefs often took their wives from the higher races of

The Birth of Khama

North West and North East Africa, and suggests that Khama may have come from this stock. But no Mendelism can explain how it is that this one man should have stood out against the inviolate traditions of the centuries, and broken the tides of evil that for ages swept over his land.

To that problem Khama himself would give but one answer—it is the transforming power of the Grace of God.

Again and again in history we have seen this amazing phenomenon—a man breaking the bars of birth, and standing out to confuse all theories and predictions. Every great man is a mystery to other men, and the greater the man, the greater the mystery. Abraham Lincoln, Shakespeare, Gordon—who can account for them or explain them? And of Khama one may appropriately use the striking metaphor used of the Greatest of all—he was a “root out of a dry ground.”

LONG before Livingstone came riding for the first time into Shoshong upon the back of a hornless ox, in 1842, an Englishman had visited the kraal. Who he was, or what his business, we do not know. But Sekhome told MacKenzie of this unknown stranger who had taken pains to tell him about the “doctrines of the Word of God,” and of the way in which his words had startled and impressed him. Perhaps Khamá had listened then, with eager heart and kindling soul.

Then Livingstone came, not to stay, but on one of his exploring expeditions to Lake Ngami. Sekhome received him with kindness, and discussed with him the strange things which he had heard from this “other man.”

Says Livingstone in his Journal :

“Sekhome having sat by me in the hut for some time in deep thought, at length addressing me by a pompous title, said, ‘I wish you would change my heart. Give me medicine to change it, for it is proud and angry, proud and angry, angry always.’

“I lifted up the New Testament, and was about to tell him of the only way in which the heart can be changed, but he interrupted me by saying, ‘Nay! I wish to have it changed by medicine to drink, and have it

“The Light that Lightened”

changed at once.’ He then rose and went away.”

Poor Sekhome! Have not many, wiser than he, desired the same magic? It is a far cry from the heathen sorcerer to the British scientist, but did not Huxley once say that if he could find anyone who could wind up his nature like a clock, and guarantee that it should always act rightly, he would gladly hand himself over to such beneficent control?

Evidently Sekhome regarded Livingstone as a rival witch-doctor, and wanted to test his magic. But his heart was never changed. Years afterwards, speaking to Mackenzie, Sekhome said—“It is all very good for you white people to follow the Word of God; God made you with straight hearts; but it is a very different thing with us black people; God made us with crooked hearts.” “Nay, Sekhome,” replied Mackenzie, “those who turn to God get a new heart and better thoughts.” “Not black people,” said Sekhome. “And yet,” he added after a pause, “and yet, after all, Khama’s heart is perhaps white. Yes! Khama’s heart is white.” Significant testimony, from such a witness!

Livingstone determined to visit Lake Ngami, but was baulked at first. He had been staying with Sechele, Chief of the Bakwana. Sechele had tentatively accepted Christianity, and had been baptized. He encouraged Livingstone’s enterprise, not perhaps from wholly

Khama

disinterested motives, for he knew that large supplies of ivory, furs, and ostrich feathers came from the Ngami region, and he desired to get some share from that inviting field, from which it was known that Sekhome drew much wealth. But Sekhome knew the route, and this, for obvious reasons, he kept secret. So Sechele sent messengers to Sekhome with the present of an ox, and asking permission for Livingstone to pass through his country. The request was refused, at the instigation of Sekhome's mother, who had not been suitably propitiated. Then followed another embassy, with an ox for Sekhome and another for his irate mother. Still Sekhome refused, on the ground that he feared that the Matebele would kill the white men, and he would be blamed. So Livingstone went by another route, and after a terrible journey and incredible hardships, reached Lake Ngami on August 1st, 1849. But he found that the crafty Sekhome had sent men ahead of him all the way, to try to prevent the Bushmen and the Bakalahari from giving any assistance to the explorers. This was Sekhome's policy throughout his troubled life. Though at times professing friendship towards the missionaries, he was far-sighted enough to fear that the coming of the white men, and especially these men with "the Word of God," as they were called, would inevitably interfere with his cherished insularity, and undermine his barbarian rule. And can we wonder that these old heathen chiefs should hesitate to tolerate a religion which in-

“The Light that Lightened”

volved, even to their glimmering comprehension, such possibilities of personal and social revolution? Is that not the very reason and the very element in the Christian faith which still makes man resist it? Dr. Stewart tells how, in the early days of the French Mission to Basutoland, Moshesh, the wily old chief, sent a head-man to watch the missionaries. That head-man became a Christian, and when rebuked by the chief, replied—“You told me I was to put one foot in the Church and keep the other out. I was to listen with one ear and keep the other closed. I put one foot in the Church, but I could not keep the other out!” But Moshesh himself was more cautious. Said he, “This message of the missionaries is an egg. I will wait till it is hatched before I form an opinion about it.”

KHAMA first heard this "Message" from the unknown trader or hunter who visited his father. Later he saw Livingstone and Moffat, and heard it from them. The first regular teacher of the tribe was Sehunelwe, a member of the Kuruman Church, who had been trained for his work by Moffat. When he was about twenty years of age, Khama visited Sechele, where he first met missionaries at work in a Bechuana town. He became their pupil, and began to read and write. Sechele, finding that the L.M.S. could not or would not send him a missionary, applied to the Boers for one. The Boers were not at that time remarkable for missionary zeal, still less were they inclined to welcome Englishmen into the interior. But Pretorius, who was President of the Transvaal, conceived the plan of settling German missionaries in Bechuanaland, so as to keep out the English, and eventually to secure Boer dominion over the hinterland. So, moved more by political motives than by Christian zeal, he succeeded in getting representatives of the Hermansburg Mission—a Lutheran Society—to go to Sechele. Had his policy been generally successful, the whole history of South Africa would have been different from what it has been, for the interior of the country would have been permanently

Khama and his headmen (about the year 1882)





Photo by]

The sandy road leading to Lake Ngami

[A. E. Jeann

Lantern-Bearers

Dutch or German. That his plan was foiled was not due to any foresight on the part of the British Government. Political partizanship in England blundered, as usual, and but for John Mackenzie, the statesman-missionary, the deep-laid schemes of German and Boer would have matured. But Mackenzie, by his blazing sincerity and his powerful intervention, saved the situation, in the face of blind politicians and a partizan press. Others got the credit for it, and were hailed as Empire Makers, but it was Mackenzie who stood in the breach. On his return from visiting Sechele, Khama persuaded his father to invite missionaries to settle amongst the Bamangwato, and the idea appealed to Sekhoma's *amour propre*. Why should he not show that he was equal to other chiefs, by having schools in his kraal? Accordingly, in 1858, Mr. Schulenburg arrived, and to him belongs the distinction of having baptised Khama and his brother Khamane. He formed a Christian Church, but prematurely, and of such materials that the foundations had to be relaid some years later. Owing to some misunderstanding between the Directors of the Hermansburg Society and its agents in Bechuanaland, financial help was for a time cut off, and the German missionaries were compelled to resort to trading with the natives for support. It was reported that the station at Shoshong had been abandoned, whereupon the L.M.S., yielding to repeated advice from Moffat and Mackenzie, decided to occupy Shoshong as a centre for the work amongst the

K h a m a

Makololo, the Matebele, and the Bamangwato tribes.

When Mackenzie arrived, however, he found that Mr. Schulenburg had not retired, but was on a visit to Natal, and on his return, the two worked amicably together for a few months, and then Schulenburg finally left.

Mackenzie threw himself into the work of evangelising the Bamangwato, with all his heart. For a time he had as his colleague Roger Price, a man who to this day is remembered by the natives as one who spoke their language better than any white man they ever knew.

Price was soon transferred to Sechele's town, and Mackenzie was left alone with a task which was enough to daunt any less courageous soul.

To Mackenzie and to all the missionaries who have followed him in that great Apostolic Succession, Khama has been a tower of strength. At first, Khamane, too, was sympathetic and apparently sincere, but his early jealousy of his brother grew, and the embers of heathen prejudice were ever smouldering in his mind. In him the good seed lacked root.

The extract of the actual register of Khama's baptism and of his wife is interesting :—

No. 5 Khame Boikano, twenty-five years of age, son of Sekhome, baptized May 6th, 1862, by H. C. Schulenbourg ; married Elizabeth Gobitsemang, May 22nd, 1862.

Lantern-Bearers

No. 13 Elizabeta Gobitsemang (Ma-Bessie),
sixteen years of age, daughter of
Chukudu, baptized twenty-seventh
April, 1862.

SHOSHONG, the town of the Bamangwato, then had a population of some 30,000. It was a typical native town, built at the foot of a rocky range, and occupying the Shoshong valley, depending for its water upon the few springs in the bed of a river in the kloof in the mountains near. Like most South African rivers, its channel was dry, except after heavy rains. The town was infested by wolves, or hyenas, which would creep out at night, and steal whatever they could—goat or child. Troops of baboons lived in the mountains, and occasionally lions ventured near. The people lived in a state of perpetual fear: fear of Morimi (God), fear of the chief, of wizards, of evil spirits, of the Matebele, or other hostile tribes, of the Boers, and of wild beasts.

Nor were their fears unfounded. The year after Mackenzie settled in Shoshong, the traders and hunters passing through brought disquieting rumours of ominous movements amongst the Matebele. Twenty years had passed since the last Matebele invasion, which had ended in their rout, and when Sekhome had “eaten up” their tribute gatherers. Missionaries were now living with Moselekatsi, and that ruthless old Ishmaelite had more than once assured Sekhome that he “had laid his spear in water,” and that the Bamangwato

Foes of the Desert

“ might sleep.” Between the territories of the two chiefs lived the Makalaka, a buffer tribe, alternately robbed and raided by each, and paying tribute to whichever for the moment was stronger. From Makalaka scouts, too, came news that made Sekhome uneasy. Then, in March, 1863, a dust-covered messenger ran panting into the khotla to say that the Matebele army was already on its way to attack the Bamangwato. Already the furthest cattle outposts had been captured, and their herds had been killed while trying to defend their charge. A village of the inoffensive Machwapong had been destroyed, only two of its inhabitants escaping to tell the tale. Sekhome got busy. By his order, a man at once ran to the hill at the outskirts of the town, and sounded loud and shrill the war-cry of the Bamangwato, and soon from all quarters men streamed into the khotla, some armed with guns, others with assegais and ox-hide shields. Sentinels were posted, spies despatched, cattle and sheep driven in from the outposts, women and children ordered to the hills for refuge, and all available men mustered for review.

Sekhome, who was not only commander-in-chief of the army, but also “ngaka,” or witch-doctor, turned to the supernatural for help. He began earnestly throwing his dice and repeating incantations. He was interrupted by Khama, who abruptly informed his father that he was wasting too much time with these things ; that, as for himself, he wanted to fight and have done

Khama

with it. The chief, who was proud of his son, pocketed the insult to his priestly magic, and ordered out the two youngest regiments, that of Khama and his brother Khamane. The people were delighted, for in spite of some misgiving as to Khama's new religion, they instinctively relied upon him, and called him their "boikanyo" or "confidence." It seemed a desperate and hopeless expeditionary force that moved off under Khama—about 200 men, only eight of whom were mounted. "Remember," said Sekhome to Khama, "you are not going on an elephant hunt; you go to fight not men even, but Matebele." Late in the afternoon Khama came into touch with the enemy, who were marching slowly in three companies, two of which were together. These the Bamangwato attacked, and at first drove the Matebele before them in confusion. But presently Khama's men heard a fierce, wild war-cry behind them. The third impi had ambushed them, and, creeping up in the long grass, suddenly attacked their rear, while the fleeing Matebele rallied, so that the Bamangwato were surrounded. It was an old trick of native warfare. Khama shouted to his men to keep together, but the old fear of the Matebele overcame them, and they fled in all directions. Khama alone kept his head, and fought his way out. The Matebele did not pursue them far, and the Bamangwato returned to Shoshong during the night, leaving about twenty dead on the veld. The loss on the

Foes of the Desert

other side was much greater. But though outnumbered and outmanœuvred, Khama's attack had a great effect upon the enemy. Five of Moselekatsi's sons were in the fight, and three of them were killed. One of them, Lobengula—afterwards the scourge of Bechuanaland, received a bullet in his neck, fired by Khama, which he carried with him to his death. The Matebele received such a check that they retired to their own country, pillaging as they went, and though they often threatened to return, they had such a wholesome respect for Khama that they never did. Moselekatsi and Lobengula said—"The Bamangwato are but dogs ; Khama is a man!"

Moreover, Khama's courage and patriotism dispelled the idea that had been fostered by the heathen party that the acceptance of Christianity would mean the extinction of the tribe. Years afterwards, when he was asked whether Christianity made his people better soldiers or worse, Sekhome replied, " If I wanted them for a raid, they would be of no use for killing women and children, but if I want them to defend their country, they will fight as well as ever."

So Khama established his reputation as a warrior. He had already won repute as a hunter. On one occasion he went with a large party to hunt a lion which had stolen many cattle and caused much trouble to the tribe. Many hunters had attempted to kill the beast, but had failed. Each night, the men, as they

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sat round the fire, were busy killing that lion with their mouths, and boasting of what they would do on the morrow. Khama was silent. One morning, as dawn was breaking, some of them awoke to see a man approaching with the skin of a large lion thrown over his shoulder. To their amazement and delight, they found it was Khama, who had quietly slipped out while the others slept, and had killed the lion single-handed. He never spoke of the deed before or after, and his modesty impressed his people as much as his courage.

ONE who knew Khama well in the early days tells of the ways in which he tried to prepare himself for the time when he would become chief. He travelled his country from end to end, and made himself familiar with every pool and path. Considering the vast extent of the country, and its character, his knowledge was almost uncanny.

But soon the inevitable cleavage came between the tribal customs and the Christian ideals. The leaven began to work, or, as old Moshesh would say, the "egg hatched." In various little ways Khama had already shown a tendency to break away from the herd instincts and traditions, as, for instance, when he refused to share in the reprisals Sekhome instituted for the Matebele raid.

But matters came to a head in April, 1865, when the great ceremony of "boguera" or circumcision drew near. Among the Bechuanas this took place about every three years, and in it centred the oldest and, to many, the dearest traditions of the tribe. This ceremony was practised by most of the South African tribes, and to this day is secretly carried on by some, though in some cases Government has prohibited it. All boys at puberty had to undergo it, and no man might inherit property or take his place in the tribe until he had under-

Khama

gone this initiation. It was almost "Masonic" in its sacredness and secrecy, but was accompanied with unmitigated license, and there was a veritable saturnalia of sexual vice. Each head-man mustered his retainers, and, surrounded by his sons, marched daily to the camp of the neophytes. Proud was the Bechuanas father who was accompanied by his sons on these occasions. As a lad, Khama had been through the ceremony, but now he refused to go or take any part in it. Sekhome's anger may be imagined when he found himself marching alone to the camp of the Initiates, for not one of his five sons would accompany him. They were either at school or church instead. This was more than Sekhome had bargained for when he had allowed the missionaries to come into his country, and when, after repeated appeals and threats, he found his authority still defied, it is said he wept tears of shame and chagrin. At last his threats and persuasions prevailed with two of his sons, but the other three stood firm. Whereupon the chief threw all the weight of his influence and authority against the missionaries, and any who dared to attend school or church had to reckon Sekhome as his enemy. Not only did he threaten civil disability and social ostracism, but since he was known to be a powerful sorcerer, he brought his supernatural magic to bear upon the waverers, who in many cases were still vulnerable to superstitious fears. He concocted quarrels with

Foes of the Household

Price and Mackenzie, and the missionaries were almost boycotted in the tribe. During these trying days, Khama and his brother Khamane headed the small band of Christians in the town. The bulk of the younger people were torn between respect for their young chief and fear of Sekhome and the wizards.

But circumcision was not the only issue at stake. From time immemorial the tribe had practised polygamy, and a chief, especially, was supposed to show his "greatness" by the number of his wives and by their relationship to various head-men of the tribe or of neighbouring friendly tribes—a method of national alliance, by the way, not altogether unknown in modern and more civilized, though monogamous, times!

Khama and Khamane had married sisters, daughters of Chukudu, a great head-man of the tribe. This in itself aroused no little jealousy against Chukudu, who put on airs about it. But, worse still, the wife of Khamane had not undergone the rite of "boyali," the corresponding ceremony to "boguera" for men. She was, indeed, the first in Shoshong to be married without this initiation, and such an outrage against established custom provoked the terrible prophecy that she would be childless, the worst calamity that could befall a wife. But, alas for the prophets! she in due course presented her husband with a fine son. This still more incensed the upholders of the old regime, and they instigated Sekhome

Khama

to take action that should wipe out this stain upon the tribal honour. The chief was reminded that some years before he had negotiated a marriage for Khama with the daughter of Pelutona, a famous sorcerer, a great rain-maker, the man who could call rain from the clouds when all others had failed. Sekhome had even paid over the cattle, as "lobola," for this young woman, and never in Bechuana history had a girl thus betrothed been cast off by the selected bridegroom.

At first Sekhome had seemed inclined to call the match off, but after the "boguera" incident, and finding that the cattle had not been returned, it seemed to the heathen party that here was a suitable excuse for testing the whole issue. So Sekhome suddenly insisted that Khama should marry the sorcerer's daughter, and make her his "head wife." Khama's answer was respectful but definite. "I refuse," he said, "on account of the Word of God, to take a second wife. You know that I have always been averse to this woman. I refused to take her for my wife before I became a Christian. Before your mind was poisoned against me you were pleased with my present wife, Ma-Bessie. Lay upon me any task you like as a test of my obedience, but I cannot take the daughter of Pelutona to wife."

This was precisely the answer that the headman had expected and desired, for their grudge was not only against Khama, but no less against Chukuru, who was a clever

Foes of the Household

schemer, and proud of his two sons-in-law, and especially because they were Christians. He was clever enough to see that their Christianity would secure his daughters from rival wives, and incidentally add to his power and position in the tribe.

So the head-men represented to Sekhome that it was evident that Chukuru was at the bottom of the plot, that he evidently intended to kill the chief, and, through his sons-in-law, obtain supreme power in the tribe. They advised that this arrogant father-in-law should be quickly put to death. Sekhome sensed the situation. He realised that evidently being a Christian made some difference, and that it was not possible to profess the Word of God and at the same time retain the old tribal customs. Why it should be so he could not understand. But there was the fact, and the only thing to do was to get rid of Chukuru, and also to dispose of Khama. It was intolerable that a chief should thus be defied in his own kraal. He hired some Matebele refugees to kill Chukuru, but they knew that this irrepressible person was one of the best shots in the country, and his skill with the assegai was known far and wide. So the plot hung fire. In January, 1866, Sekhome arranged a *coup d'état*, which would, he thought, settle the whole business, and rid the country of this mischievous leaven of Christianity. One dark night he took with him a number of his most trusty followers, and marched to the huts of his

Khama

two sons. He ordered his men to "fire." "Upon whom?" said they. "Upon these huts," he replied. But not a man would obey. At length he began to load a rifle himself, but, to his horror, found himself disarmed by one of his own head-men. Terror took him by the throat, for he saw what this meant. By all the very tribal laws to which he had appealed, his own life was now forfeit to his sons. So he fled in fear, to await the death that now seemed inevitable.

To his amazement, a messenger came from Khama to say that, instead of cutting his throat, as he was entitled to do by the law and custom of the Bamangwato, he forgave him, and wished him to return, on condition that he would not persecute the Christians, and would not persist in the marriage question. At first he could not believe that there was no treachery in this strange leniency, but at last the trembling and incredulous villain promised, and returned; it was announced that the strife was at an end, and that Christians were no longer to be molested.

But once again in power, he soon began to plot. He conceived the idea of recalling his brother Macheng, who was legally the rightful chief, and of outwardly investing him with the chieftainship. That would, at any rate, secure the succession from any Christian taint, in the event of his own death. But he was bold enough to hope that, after having used his brother as his tool, he would be able to get rid

Foes of the Household

of him by the usual methods, and then resume his rule, with no rival and with no "Word of God" to thwart his heathen purposes.

Away went the secret messengers to Macheng. He was at this time living in the town of Sechele. For twenty years he had been a herd-slave of the Matebele, but Moffat had secured his release.

Meanwhile, Sekhome worked upon the fears and superstitions of the people. The Bamangwato respected Khama, but were puzzled by his strange compunctions, and, to them, unexplainable leniency. According to the only ethics they knew, Khama ought to have killed Sekhome, and assumed the chieftainship forthwith. But, since he would neither kill his father nor obey him, they began to distrust his powers of leadership.

Among the Bechuana there is a proverb, "A man cannot live without charms." The inherent power of ancient superstitions may be realized from the tenacity with which they cling to peoples who have for centuries emerged into what we proudly call civilization ; but we can scarcely measure the dominance of these ancestral fears amongst a primitive tribe like the Bamangwato. They used medicines and charms for every conceivable possibility—for their cattle and sheep, which were made to pass through the smoke of burning herbs ; for their gardens and corn-fields, to make them fertile ; for their waggons, to make them run well ; for their guns, to make them shoot well ;

Khama

and even for their dogs, to make them fierce. There is no event in life, no form of sickness, no birth or death, but has its appropriate medicine or charm, which, of course, must be paid for ; and the witch-doctor is generally the most powerful and the most dreaded man in the tribe, making even the chief tremble at his anger.

Now Sekhome was not only chief, but was renowned as sorcerer, too, and he turned loose all his powers of witchcraft and sorcery. Waking one night, Khama found a huge fire blazing outside his hut, and on looking out, saw the whole convocation of the tribal wizards busy at their enchantments, casting charm after charm, plant after plant, into the fire, chanting and shrieking their weird curses and spells. Who could wonder if Khama should flinch when he found all the barbaric superstitions of his ancestors thus focussed against him. But he was unmoved. Creeping quietly outside, he suddenly appeared in the very midst of the wizards, who fled panic-stricken from the scene, leaving him, as they thought, to his doom. Fearlessly Khama stamped out the fire, and then went back to bed.

But he could not so easily stamp out the smouldering embers of generations of paganism, bred in the very bone of his people. Some of the young men came to plead with him to employ counter-charms. "We do not fear Sekhome," said they, "but we do fear the wizards." Considering that there are still so

Foes of the Household

many in civilized lands who "do not believe in ghosts, but are afraid of them," can we wonder at the counsel of these heathen waverers ?

The result of Khama's refusal to "use magic" was that many timid folk sided with Sekhome, who pushed his advantage and wove his plots. At last, on the evening of March 8th, 1866, Khama was warned that an attempt was to be made upon his life that very night ; he had to fight or flee. He would not fight his father, so, with a few friends, he left the town, and, taking with him some of his own cattle, fled to the mountains near. There he remained blockaded for six weeks. The town was in ferment, the missionary was hooted in the streets, and Sekhome's mother, backed by the wizards, urged that all the white men should be killed. But Mackenzie was permitted to go every Sunday and preach to the fugitives in the hills.

Khama would not take any offensive, but Sekhome had no scruples. He despatched two well-known sorcerers, with charms and spells, and in case the magic might fail, it was fortified with poison to put in the wells. Protected by the supposed immunity conferred by the witch-doctors, they crept up the hills, assured that "there would be darkness wherever they went," and that no bullet or spear could touch their charmed bodies. Khama, however, had posted sentries at the water, who, hearing stealthy footsteps, fired and shot the very man who was carrying the charms, which were found beside

Khama

his lifeless body next morning. The other wizard decamped, carrying to Sekhome the disquieting news that his magic was powerless against Khama. The desperate chief then pressed his siege, and for eight days cut off all water supplies from the refugees, till the lowing of the cattle could be heard far off. At last, finding that he could neither kill nor capture his recalcitrant sons, Sekhome came to terms. He asked Khama to return, and this he did, after insisting that he should re-enter the town at the head of his men. Thus, outwardly, the breach was healed again; but both parties preserved a state of armed neutrality. There were certain men, however, for whom Sekhome had no quarter, and chief of these was Chukudu, the objectionable father-in-law, who was lured into the bush and speared, his body being left to the wolves.

TN a short time Macheng arrived. Sekhome had tried to withdraw the invitation, sent when he thought that the sympathies of the majority were with Khama. But Macheng was not to be put off. He calmly ignored the subsequent messages, and Sekhome had to put the best face possible on it.

A great assembly of the tribe was called, and Sekhome introduced his brother with many flattering words, and said he had recalled the exile who was now their chief. One after another the bewildered and smooth-tongued head-men arose to hail the new chief and to praise Sekhome. Khama attended the assembly, though he well knew that one condition of Macheng's return was that he should "pledge himself to kill Khama." When the flatterers had ceased, Khama spoke. His speech was characteristic of the man, fearless and frank. Addressing Macheng, he said:—"Khose! (chief)—It would appear that I alone of all the Bamangwato am to speak unpleasant words to you this day. The Bamangwato say they are glad to see you here. I say I am not glad to see you. If Sekhome could not live with his own children, but drove them from the town, and shot at them, how is he to submit to be ruled by you? How will he learn to obey? If I thought there would

Khama

be peace in the town, I would say I was glad to see you. I say I am sorry to see you because that only disorder and death can take place when two chiefs sit in the khotla. I wish all the Bamangwato to know that I renounce all pretensions to the chieftainship. Here are two chiefs already, and I refuse to be called the third, as some of you have mockingly called me. My kingdom, henceforth, consists of my horses, my rifle, and my waggon. If you will give me liberty to possess these as a private person, I renounce all concerns in the politics of the town. Especially do I decline to attend meetings held in the dark. They must be held in the daylight. I am sorry, Macheng, that I can give you no better welcome to the Bamangwato."

It was a plucky speech to fall amongst scheming and double-tongued men, but Macheng appeared not to resent it. His reply was brief. "Many speeches have been made to-day," said he, "and many words of welcome have been addressed to me. These have I heard with the ear. One speech, and one only, have I heard with my heart, and that is the speech of Khama. I thank Khama for his speech."

According to his agreement with Sekhome, Macheng's first task was to kill Khama and Khamane, and the old chief waited impatiently for the fulfilment of the bargain. But, to his chagrin, Macheng seemed in no hurry. Indeed, he sought Khama's confidence, expressed his

Macheng—the Wicked Uncle

regret that he had ever been led to make any such promise, and said that since he had come to Shoshong he had found that the people of the Word of God alone spoke the truth. In the public courtyard, or *khotla*, some time later, Macheng publicly repudiated the compact, and said to Sekhome: "You called me from the Bakwena to come here and kill your rebellious sons. My heart refuses. If you wish them to be killed, kill them yourself."

One can imagine the mortification of the old chief at the failure of his plot. Here was Macheng installed as chief, and himself placed in a secondary position in the tribe, while Khama's death, for which he had risked all this, seemed as remote as ever! Baffled, but not beaten, he determined to make another desperate throw, and by one grand swoop to get rid of all his enemies and regain his lost power.

Many of the old men were still loyal to him. So it was arranged that an Assembly should be called, at which Macheng and Khama should take their places in the *khotla* first. They were then to be surrounded by Sekhome and his trusted followers, who would make sure and short work of their enemies.

The plan might have succeeded had not Khama first got wind of it and warned Macheng, who ordered his men not to assemble until after Sekhome's adherents had taken their places.

Sekhome advanced into the *khotla*, and, striking one of Macheng's warriors, felled him

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to the ground. This was the signal for the attack. But not a spear was raised. Sekhome's followers stood sullenly by, and presently gathered round him and urged him to flee. With only one solitary attendant, he fled the town, and hid in the mountains, eventually finding sanctuary with Mokosi, a chief residing near Kolobeng.

Macheng, thus left in undisputed power, never became popular with the Bamangwato. He has been described as the ugliest native ever seen, and his manners corresponded to his face. He had lived so long with the Matebele that he wanted to introduce customs which the Bamangwato despised. His chief occupation was to eat and sleep, and though at first he seemed tolerant to the Christians, he soon began to show his hatred and contempt towards them.

In 1867, Mackenzie commenced to build a church in Shoshong, and at last, after much toil and patience, it was completed. The opening ceremony was a great occasion. Mackenzie invited all the tribe to come; an ox was killed, and there was a grand feast. Some of the heathen were at first afraid to enter, lest there might be reprisals on the part of the Christians for their previous sufferings. So they came prepared for emergencies, with knives and spears hidden under their blankets. But the simple address, the solemn prayer, and the open-hearted hospitality disarmed suspicion. After the people had feasted and

Macheng—the Wicked Uncle

departed, Macheng, Khama, and Khamane sat down with the missionaries to eat, and were provided with knives and forks !

In 1868, Mackenzie was invited by the Directors of the L.M.S. to visit England on furlough, and he was absent from Shoshong nearly three years. It must have been a severe test for the little band of Christians, left as shepherdless sheep amongst the wolves in the desert, and surrounded by the dominant influences of heathenism. When, in August, 1871, Mackenzie returned, he brought with him a young colleague, whose name became illustrious in the annals of South Africa—James Hepburn. The missionaries were met twenty miles out from Shoshong by Khama and two of his brothers, who had come to greet them. It was then found that, under the guidance and example of Khama, the work and spirit of the Church had not only been maintained, but the day school had been kept going, and the congregations at public worship had actually increased. Mackenzie received two letters of welcome, one from the twelve European traders residing in Shoshong, and the other from Macheng, who assured the missionary that he felt toward him as an old friend and brother ! This, however, in the light of after events, appeared to be more diplomatic than sincere.

Though he had begun his rule by admiring and trusting Khama, Macheng gradually grew jealous and suspicious of him. In this he was influenced by a visitor and friend, called

Khama

Kuruman, a son of Moselekatsi, and brother of Lobengula, who was living at Shoshong when Hepburn arrived. Kuruman was a claimant to the chieftainship of the Matebele tribe, and was bitterly opposed to the missionaries. "Why allow these men to take the pillow from under your head?" said he.

It is believed that one of the most interesting and exciting portions of Mr. Rider Haggard's story, "King Solomon's Mines," is founded upon the efforts of Kuruman to depose Lobengula, though, in actual life, Kuruman was lacking in the wisdom and self-control of Mr. Haggard's hero. Macheng lent Kuruman three regiments to carry out a raid upon the Matebele, and placed them under the command of a relative of his own, a man of inferior rank. On the march, the impis mutinied, and declared that they knew no leader but Khama, the son of Sekhome. When news of this reached Macheng, he was greatly incensed, and his antipathy to Khama was deepened through the treachery of Raditlari, a half-brother to the young chief, who had done his best to make mischief in the tribe. At last Macheng determined to get rid of Khama, and tried the usual charms and magic. These proving ineffective, he tried to buy strychnine, with which to poison the sons of Sekhome. A renegade white man undertook to get the stuff from a store where it was kept to poison wolves, and was duly paid in ivory for his commission. A sharp-witted fellow in the store, suspecting mischief, sold the ignorant

Macheng—the Wicked Uncle

accomplice marking-ink, and it was duly taken to Macheng, who then invited Khama to “drink coffee!” This hospitality, however, was respectfully declined. So that plot failed. Things went from bad to worse, until at last retribution came. Khama sent to Sechele, chief of the Bakwena, who was his friend, and who sent soldiers, under command of his son, Sebele. Suddenly these men appeared at dawn, and the dissolute and drunken Macheng was driven from the town. Sechele had ordered that Macheng was to be shot, but to this Khama refused to consent. He was roughly told that he owed his life to Khama, and ordered to leave the town without delay. Without shirt or shoes, almost helpless from fright, he clambered up the mountain, followed by some of his head-men. Khama, anxious to avert blood-shed, rode out after them and shouted, “He who is for Khama, let him return!” The people returned, almost to a man, and Macheng, with none so poor as to do him reverence, was left to scramble up the mountain as best he could. From that day he was a fugitive, and lived among strangers to the day of his death.

THUS Khama became chief of the Bamangwato, by the election of the head-men of the tribe, in September, 1872. He accepted the position with some reluctance. "I have not fought for the chieftainship, but for my life," said he.

He was speedily confronted with problems of rulership, made all the more perplexing by the fact of his Christian faith, and found that there was a strife of God, no less real than the peace of God.

Under any circumstances it was no light task to rule a people bred in bloodshed and superstition—"half devil, and half child"; but to break free from the only forms of restraint known to them, and to appeal to motives foreign to their thought, was as dangerous as it was difficult.

His first dilemma arose from the fact that, as chief, he was officially responsible for the due performance of certain heathen rites and ceremonies involved in all the popular traditions of the tribe, and regarded by almost all the people as essential to their very existence. As chief, he now represented this cultural inheritance, and these "short-range animal emotions," as Benjamin Kidd calls them, and which, he declares, become of less and less importance as civilization advances, but which are, nevertheless,

Khama Becomes Chief

tenacious in the primitive and savage mind. As a private person, he had, at no little cost and peril, broken away from the herd, but to do so as chief demanded courage and conviction such as few men possess.

The people were about to commence to dig their gardens, and this was always done with elaborate ritual, the origins of which run back into immemorial myths, and which seem to have some kind of relation to the rites of Adonis described in Fraser's "Golden Bough." Were they to be told to go out and dig without any ceremony at all, or could the customs be diverted into higher and purer ideals? That was the problem, and Khama decided "not to destroy, but to fulfil." He called the tribe to his "letsemma," as a Christian chief, in a Christian way, and thus publicly acknowledged from the outset his adherence to the Christian faith. He told his people that, while he did not prohibit heathen ceremonies, they must not be performed in the khotla, and, as chief, he would have nothing to do with them. Then followed a Christian service, led by Mackenzie.

So much for "the idols of the tribe."

But the next difficulty concerned the white traders who had come to live in the town, or who from time to time passed through the country. From the days of his boyhood he had seen the ravages which the white man's Drink caused amongst the native people, and a strong determination had grown in his mind

Khama

that, if ever he became chief, he would keep this curse from his country.

Up to this time, "Cape Smoke," a villainous concoction made by the grape farmers of the Cape, and fortified with tobacco juice and other worse flavourings, had been freely imported and sold without let or hindrance. It was, of course, a source of considerable profit to the importers, and the results were obvious in the debauchery and degradation of the natives. This exploitation of other races by the whites has been a foul blot on our civilization, not only in South Africa, but throughout the world.

In the Cape Colony it has been the custom on the wine-farms to pay part of the wages of the natives in wine or brandy, and so undeveloped was the Christian Conscience on the matter that one often heard the practice defended on the ground that it helped to kill off the natives and keep them down!

At Kimberley, and on the Rand, later, it was found necessary for economic and industrial reasons to prohibit the sale of intoxicants to natives, but the law has always been difficult to enforce when it is not supported by ethical and Christian ideals.

On becoming chief, Khama had stated his wishes to the traders individually, and for a time there was some improvement, but he found that newcomers were bringing the drink into the country. So, on January 1st, 1873, he called a meeting of all the white men, and they

Khama Becomes Chief

came, to the number of twenty-one, though several only came after repeated summons. His speech was clear, direct, and imperative. He formally announced his law about "boyalwa" (strong drink). It was henceforth illegal to sell it in the town or to bring it into the country.

After this warning, all brandy discovered in the town would be destroyed, and its owner fined and expelled. Many of the traders at once declared their approval of the new law, but others wanted to parley. One pointed out that they had always been accustomed to "have a little drink now and then," and asked if that was to stop? Khama replied, "Ever since we saw the first white man we have been accustomed to see them pull out a bottle and give one another something to drink. For a long time we thought it was medicine, and it did not concern us, for it was not given to black men. I do not want to interfere with your personal habits, so long as they do not become a nuisance to the town. But if, when you give one another drink, you turn round and give it to my people also, I shall regard you as blameworthy."

Another asked if the law would prevent them from passing drink through the country? "What other country do you want to destroy with it?" asked the chief. "Why should it pass and destroy others? Are there not others like ourselves on in front?"

Eventually he conceded the importation of brandy in cases, for their own consumption, but

K h a m a

no barrels were to be brought in, "and there must be no drunkenness."

At the week-end several of the whites got roaring drunk.

Khama went down to the scene of their orgy, and noted with high disdain the names of the besotted traders. The presence of the traders in Shoshong stood for all that made for progress and civilization. They represented the vast unknown world of wonder beyond the hills and the desert, of which only strange and incredible stories had reached the kraals, and the white men and their stores awakened in the minds of the natives something "of the wild surmise" felt by stout Cortez and his men when, silent upon a peak in Darien, they looked upon a new world. But whatever the cost, and without counting the cost, Khama made his resolve.

HYDERABAD

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Serowe, the Chief's Town

[A. E. Jennings





Photo by

L. A. E. Jennings
A Sunday Service in the place of the tribal assembly. Over 2,500 present

MR. HEPBURN describes the great scene at Khama's Court on the Monday following. The chief asked no questions, but simply stated the facts as he had seen them. "You think," said he, "you can despise my laws because I am a black man. Well, I am black, but I am chief of my own country. When you white men rule the country, then you may do as you like. At present I rule, and I shall maintain the laws you insult and despise." Then he went on, naming the offenders one by one. "Take everything you have, strip the iron off the roofs, gather all your possessions, and go ! More, if there is any other white man here who does not like my laws, let him go too. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. I am trying to lead my people according to the Word of God, which we have received from you white people, and you show us an example of wickedness. You know that some of my brothers have learned to like the drink, and you tempt them with it. I make an end of it to-day. Go ! Take your cattle, leave my town, and never come back."

Utter silence followed this speech. The men were smitten with shame and bewilderment. This decree meant blank ruin to many who were thus expelled, and some of them followed Khama to his house to plead for pity. "Pity!"

Khama

said he. "When I had pity, and warned you, you despised me. Now I have pity for my own people." One pleaded that he had grown up in the country, and that Khama and he were old friends. "What!" said Khama, "you dare to speak, you who made me a promise, and then brought casks of drink to the river and smuggled them into the country? You call yourself my friend! You are my worst enemy!"

So the canteen keepers and brandy smugglers had to load up their waggons and trek, and the Great Thirst Land "went dry."

Khama's prohibition of the white man's brandy, though regarded by some as arbitrary, and by others as fanatical, was so obviously based upon sound reasons that it could be defended by all classes as a matter of social and economic expediency. Such conscience as existed amongst his own people supported him, and very few of his head-men opposed him, openly, at least.

But when he went further, and forbade the making or the sale of Kaffir beer, he struck a blow at cherished customs rooted in the very life of the community. Even some of the missionaries and magistrates of native districts would argue that Kaffir beer is practically harmless, if not beneficial to the health of the natives. Kaffir beer is made by placing sorghum, or kaffir corn, in water till it sprouts. It is then dried, and ground to powder between stones, fermented, and boiled. In some districts the

Black Checkmates White

natives add ferments extracted from the roots of certain plants, to help the brewing. The product is a thin, watery, nauseous gruel, which serves for both food and drink. As a beverage, it is hardly as alcoholic as the lightest European beer, and very wholesome. The natives can absorb enormous quantities of this concoction, but after drinking for a day and a half, without any needless intervals, they are apt to get somewhat quarrelsome, and then tribal fights begin, and broken heads are sure to result. It has been urged, however, that these fights perform a useful function in clearing the moral atmosphere of a kraal, and are a convenient outlet for smouldering discontent. A Kaffir beer-drink is equivalent to an English Derby, a prize-fight, and a garden-party rolled into one, and it is observed with much ceremonial.

There is another kind of native beer, called khadi or honey-beer, which is more potent than the corn-beer, but, happily, honey is not so plentiful as corn in Bechuanaland, so that the deadly khadi is comparatively scarce. But the natives have learned how to "mix their drinks," and when the khadi is mixed with the corn-beer, the result is delirious drunkenness, and natives who have acquired this taste will barter everything to get the white man's brandy.

When, therefore, Khama called his young men together and announced that the making and the sale of Kafir beer was to stop, the consternation can be imagined. It was puritanism

Khama

against paganism ! " You take the corn that God has given to us in answer to our prayer," said he, " and you not only destroy it, but you make stuff that causes mischief."

Hepburn even mildly said that he thought this beer was regarded by the people as a kind of food. " No ! " said Khama. " These are the lies you missionaries are told. If a man wants to concoct any wickedness, he uses beer for his purpose. We may deceive you, our missionaries, but we do not deceive ourselves."

So strong was the opposition to this amazing decree that the life of the chief was in peril. Mutterings of discontent and mutiny were loud, and only his personal character and courage saved him. He told them plainly that they might kill him, but they could not conquer him, or turn him aside from his decision. And he won. From that day to this he has never flinched.

As recently as October, 1921, news reached him that away on the borders of his territory some head-men had held a beer-drink. Khama sent for them, and in due course they arrived in the khotla, complaining that they had been treated like criminals, and driven in by the sjambok. " Well," said the chief, " you know the law ? " " Yes," they replied, " we know the law." " And you broke the law ? "

" Yes," they had to admit, they had broken the law. " Then," said Khama, " you are each fined one ox." And the crestfallen head-men retired.

Black Checkmates White

But it was not only the white man's brandy and the black man's beer that he prohibited. He put an end to witchcraft, and abolished "rain-making"; he put his foot upon the time-honoured ceremony of circumcision and the degrading customs associated with the rite. He made a law against the purchase of slaves—Masarwa or Bushmen—and declared himself the Bushmen's friend, allowing them the rights of free men. He abolished "bogadi," or the purchase of wives by cattle, and set his face against polygamy. And these things, though done by a despotic ruler, were still done in a tolerant spirit, so far as many of the heathen customs were concerned. "If you wish to charm your crops," said he, "you must do it, but I will have no part in it, and as chief I will not recognise it."

Has there been in history a more dramatic figure than this son of a sorcerer, standing up in the kraal of his tribe, and bravely breaking with the heathen sanctions and standards of his race? One thinks of that day, thirteen centuries ago, when Mohammed went into his father's house in Medina, and shattered the idols, crying, "There is no God but God!" Thus, but with clearer vision and nobler spirit, did this young chief

"forswear and put away
The idols of his sheltered house."

It was not the outcome of a sudden impulse, the passing fancy of a fanatic. These decisions

Khamma

and ideals had matured and lured him through long and perilous years. To obey them and attain them he had paid the price of danger, loneliness, and loss. "When I was still a lad," he said once to Hepburn, "I used to think how I would govern my town, and what kind of kingdom it should be."

WHEN Khama became chief, his father was living in well-earned obscurity, under the protection of Gaseitsiwe, at Kanye, in the Bangwaketse country. Now Sekhome had the best of reasons for courting oblivion. Outlawed and disgraced, he had no business to be alive at all. The primitive code of a Kaffir tribe takes no account of filial affection, and had Khama been an ordinary chief, he would, long ere this, have had the treacherous intriguer assegaied out of the way, for his life was doubly forfeit. Communities have rights that take precedence of family relationships, and it puzzled the Bamangwato greatly that Khama should show a leniency that looked so much like dangerous weakness. Imagine their amazement, therefore, when, towards the end of 1872, Khama announced that he had decided to recall Sekhome! Relying upon the loyalty of his people, and eager to show a spirit of Christian forgiveness, Khama wished to bring the prodigal father home to end his days in the bosom of his family.

Sekhome received the invitation with surprise and delight. This son of his was a puzzle to his heathen mind; but he knew he could be trusted, so, after six years of exile, he prepared to return. The homeward route led through the country of Sechele, who was of sterner stuff. He

Khama

intimated that on no account would he allow the old traitor to pass, and said that if he caught him he would kill him. Nothing daunted, Sekhome took a circuitous route, and haughtily refusing to ride in the waggon Khama had thoughtfully sent, travelled on foot, a distance of about 200 miles.

The first month of 1873, therefore, saw the incorrigible old rascal once more installed in the khotla, and it was soon evident that his heart was still unchanged, and that he was as mischievous and unscrupulous as ever. He immediately began to weave his webs and lay his plots to regain his ascendancy over the tribe. All the forces of reaction rallied to him; all the smouldering embers of heathen prejudice, the repressed and subconscious superstitions of the past, awoke to life and found leadership and blatant recognition. Was not Sekhome a great sorcerer, and was he not the symbol and the agent of the mighty magic and the ancient traditions which had made the Bamangwato great among the tribes ? Whereupon the rain-makers, the smellers-out, the wizards, and the medicine-men lifted up their heads and rejoiced.

Sekhome soon found a ready tool in Khamane, Khama's younger brother. Up to this time the brothers had lived together in seeming accord, though from childhood Khamane had shown signs of occasional and perhaps natural jealousy, and had often refused to eat food with Khama. Sekheme now began

The Return of Sekhome

to flatter Khamane, and skilfully to fan the flame of his ambition and envy. The two were often seen to be openly allied in various schemes flagrantly subversive of the authority of the chief. Khamane was warned of the danger of this attitude, but he was dazzled by the prospects of power dangled before him by Sekhome, and lured still further by his presumption of Khama's leniency. The climax came when Sekhome made over, and Khamane received, a town of Bushmen—a vassal tribe, which strictly belonged to the chief. This was open *lese majesté*, and committed Khamane to pretensions of equality, if not of superiority, in the tribe, and Khama was humiliated before the people. If this were ignored, his authority would vanish.

KHAMA now had to act, and promptly. Of course, had he followed precedent, he would have had the traitors killed and their bodies flung to the wolves. Instead of that, he quietly withdrew from the capital, and took up his quarters at Serowe, about seventy miles away, north-east of Shoshong, announcing that there he would receive any of his people who wished to follow him. To the dismay and chagrin of the treacherous plotters, almost the entire town moved out, and tramped to the camp of their chief. Hunters, head-men, young men, women, and children trooped across the veld, till Shoshong was almost deserted, and the usurpers were left with about 5,000 empty huts. Presently, finding that Serowe was too open to attack from his other enemies, Khama trekked with his tribe some 200 miles further north-west, and settled on the Botletle River towards Lake Ngami. To reach this spot it was necessary to pass through some of the worst parts of the Kalahari Desert, over tracks full of deep white sand, and where the oxen had sometimes to travel for three or four days without water. It was a terrific undertaking, and on the trek Khama became separated from some of his people. Sekhoma took full advantage of his son's difficulties, stole some of Khama's oxen, and carried off some women.

The Might of the Meek

Khama retaliated by allowing a waggon with a valuable load belonging to Khamane to pass unmolested through his ranks. In a few months, however, he returned with a small force to Shoshong, to demand the return of his property. Seven miles out of the town he was ambushed by Sekhome's men, but drove them off, and was able to secure both cattle and women without bloodshed. When he saw how weak was the influence of his rival relatives, he determined to return as soon as he could and take possession of his capital once more.

Meanwhile, Shoshong was left to the tender mercies of Sekhome and Khamane, who retained a few of the baser spirits and the more heathen elements of the tribe. There are not many white men now alive who can speak from experience of what life was like in Shoshong in these days. Mr. Frank Whiteley, now resident in England, is probably the only living man who was there. He happened to arrive in Shoshong while the usurpers held sway, and describes the general conditions of lawlessness which obtained. Every encouragement was given to the natives to insult the white traders and to practice extortion. They would demand, almost with menace, ridiculous prices for their ivory and ostrich feathers, and if the trader refused to buy, would deliberately exasperate and insult him by every means in their power. Should he be betrayed into the slightest retaliation, the unfortunate

Khama

trader was brought before the chiefs and fined.

Matters went from bad to worse, and at last, finding that they could not continue to rule in an almost empty town, the traitors sent a deputation to Khama, and begged him to return. Khamane persuaded Mackenzie and Hepburn to go with him on this embassy, thinking, no doubt, that the presence of the missionaries might give some colour of sincerity to his request. Khama refused, with indignation. "You treated me like a dog before my own people and in my own khotla," said he, "and I refuse to be in the same town with you and Sekhome."

In less than a year, however, Khama did return, uninvited, and bringing with him the whole of the tribe that had seceded with him, across the desert, suddenly took possession of Sesheso, the main fountain from which Shoshong obtained its water, and from which it was named. From thence he issued a challenge, saying, "I am here. Come and fight." The battle was short and sharp, and in a few hours Khama's men were victorious, and Sekhome and Khamane were put to flight. So on February 5th, 1875, Khama became, *de facto* and *de jure*, paramount ruler of the Bamangwato.

Throughout these years of struggle with the foes of his own household, the thing that stands out in the record of this remarkable man is the wonderful patience and generosity he showed towards his rebellious relatives. The

The Might of the Meek

significance of this can only be measured against the fact that it was contrary to all the usages of his people, and against all the interests of common expediency. Even amongst civilized nations it has always seemed permissible "to wade through slaughter to a throne," and no native chief, at any rate, was ever supposed to hesitate to kill off his rivals, however close their relationship to himself, if they stood in his path to power. Pure despotism, as a mode of government, has some advantages for certain stages of human evolution, but to be effective, it must be ruthless. If diluted by democratic idealism, or tempered by sentiment, it is apt to recoil upon the head of the wavering despot. Sekhome, Macheng, and Khamane had repeatedly been guilty of the blackest treachery, and had again and again broken the most solemn vows of loyalty, plunging the tribe into civil war, and thereby exposing them to attacks from their ever-ready and predatory neighbours. Had Khama had these men killed, no one would have questioned his action, and his prestige in the tribe would have been enhanced. His leniency was not due to lack of courage, nor, be it said, to excess of modesty, for he is temperamentally egotistical, and jealous of his supremacy. It was a sincere desire to apply what he felt to be the Christian spirit and ethic to the practical tests of human government, and this, in the face of precedent and provocation, he vindicated.

Later, he allowed Sekhome to return, but

Kham a

shorn of his power, and he died in 1883. Khamane also returned, and, as will be seen, again caused mischief till he was finally driven out.

HAVE we not all, at times, longed, with Omar Kháyyám, to be able to "grasp this sorry Scheme of Things," and "shatter it to bits," so as to mould it "nearer to the Heart's Desire"?

Khama was now firmly seated in authority and power in the tribe. His word was law, his will supreme. But he found, as we all find, that this "sorry Scheme" includes human beings, who are not easily shattered, and who obstinately refuse to be moulded.

Had he chosen to follow the line of least resistance, to enforce the average standards and accepted levels of his people, his task would have been easier. But even absolute autocracy has to reckon with the spirit of democracy that is somehow inherent in human nature. Enforced ideals always kick back, and Paganism has a way of riding back on the shoulders of Puritanism when Reaction follows Reform. When Khama donned the leopard's skin, the insignia of his chieftainship, he found himself faced by active and relentless enemies. First there was the deep under-tow of Paganism. Many of the old men clung to the ancient customs, and tried in every possible way to perpetuate them. The people, though many of them had forsaken the superstitions in which they had been bred, were still subconsciously

Khama

dominated by them. "When the half-gods go, the gods arrive"—but the half-gods linger long. In Britain, after centuries of Christian tradition, we are still swayed by the gods of the gutter, and can it be wondered that a people steeped in centuries of fear and savagery should still tremble at the glance of the witch-doctor? Then, on the borders of the Bamangwato country, were the Matebele, and other tribes, waiting like hungry wolves for any chance of attack. Next, the Boers were intriguing and fomenting intertribal quarrels all around, with the ultimate intention of getting possession of the country, and unscrupulous traders were always on the watch for any opportunity of smuggling in the prohibited brandy. Moreover, famine always hovered near; drought and rinderpest were the frowning faces behind every smiling harvest.

In the face of odds like these, Khama took up "The Black Man's Burden," made sometimes all the heavier by the White Man's greed, to build up Law and Order out of the ruins of anarchy, and to reap the old reward—

"The blame of those ye better,
The hate of those ye guard."

During his self-imposed banishment on the Botletli River, Khama had come into contact with the Batuana, a younger branch of the Bamangwato tribe, settled at Lake Ngami, and on his return to Shoshong he had brought a message from their chief, begging for a mis-

"The Black Man's Burden"

sionary to come to teach them. Lake Ngami had been discovered by Livingstone in 1849, when the great explorer had remained there a short time and preached to the people. Since then, an attempt to form a mission station there had resulted in one of the most tragic failures in the annals of missionary heroism. Now, however, under the ægis of Khama, and with the help of the Bamangwato Christians, Hepburn decided to make another attempt. After eighteen months' preparation, and accompanied by his wife and three little children, Hepburn set out on a weary trek, lasting six weeks, across the desert, and in June, 1877, reached Yanana, on Lake Ngami. He had brought with him two native teachers, and he remained there several months. The people were exceedingly benighted, though some of them still clung to the faith taught them by Livingstone and others who had followed him. The young chief Moremi seemed at first to be sympathetic with the Mission, but was something of a drunkard.

In 1880 he visited Shoshong, where, as he had been warned, Khama had prohibited brandy and Kaffir beer. Moremi had come from the heart of the Great Thirst Land, and was not disposed to accommodate himself to the restrictions of his host. He persuaded Khamane (who by this time had been allowed to return under promise of good behaviour) to make a little Kaffir beer for him. Now, the chief, in his tribe, is all but omniscient; he has his own secret service agents;

Khama

and the brew was soon stopped. Then Moremi begged Khama to suspend the law for his special benefit. The chief refused, saying, "When I visit your town, I will respect your laws, Moremi." Even this dignified rebuke was ineffective, and presently news came that Khamane had again started a shebeen for the thirsty Moremi. Retribution was swift and sharp. Taking a burning brand, Khama thrust it into the dry thatch of Khamane's hut, and in a few minutes it was a smouldering heap. Moremi returned to Ngami, and eventually died a drunkard.

Meanwhile, Khama went forward with his task of rulership. In his person he combined the functions of both Houses of Parliament, of judge and jury, of War Office and Board of Agriculture, of chief of police and Foreign Secretary, of patriarch and protector of his people. The day began early, with prayer, and Khama would be seated in the khotla soon after dawn—a wide courtyard, ringed about with a stockade of wooden posts, and in the centre a great tree. Under that tree the business of the tribe was conducted. Seated round the chief were his head-men, whose judgment was considered and whose advice was listened to. Runners came in from far outposts with news—an ox had died twenty miles out—a trader's waggon had broken down on the veld—a hunter had crossed the border—a man had flogged his wife too much, and she had died—a trader had arrived and wished to open a store—men

“The Black Man’s Burden”

with grievances came to tell their hardships—disputes had to be settled—offenders had to be punished—and all the details of tribal necessity had to be considered. A group of old men, dressed in the insignia of witch-doctors, approach. They want to reinstate the ceremonial of circumcision. “You may do as you like with your own sons,” says the chief, “but you shall compel no one.” A runner arrives with news! Away on the border there is a Boer commando; they have been driving Bamangwato off their farms. Enquiry shows that the Boers had been intriguing with Khamane and with the disgruntled Kuruman. Their object is obviously to drive all the native tribes northwards to Lake Ngami and right up to the Zambesi. A hunter comes to report that on the previous evening he had found an old Bechuana woman seven miles out on the veld. She was blind, and hopelessly groping about in the bushes. “What are you doing here?” he had asked, and her reply was that as she was old and blind, she had been “thrown away” and left to die. The hunter said he had given her food for the night, and had promised to report the matter to the chief. Khamane at once orders a waggon to be sent to fetch her in, and explains to the astonished head-man that she will be provided for by the Church.

Living within or upon the borders of the Bamangwato were various small tribes, such as the Bakalahari, the Baseleka, the Makalaka, the Bakaleng, and many others; sporadic off-

Khama

shoots or discontented and dwindling remnants of other tribes which from time to time had sought sanctuary. Over these the Bamangwato chiefs ruled, accepting their tribute and often oppressing them as vassals. Many of them came in Khama's time to escape from cruel slavery in the hope that, though still slaves, they might find life a little more bearable. To their surprise, they found themselves treated as human beings ; the chief actually spoke to them as "my children" ; they were permitted to own cattle and land, and were able to live in peace and security. Selous, the famous hunter, describes the effect of this treatment upon the Bakalahari, a miserable nomadic clan of savages who had wandered over the burning sands of the Kalahari Desert, living on roots and reptiles, with an occasional feast on a trapped eland, "joyless, soulless, hopeless animals, believing nothing," and often the prey of the lions and hyenas with whom they shared the deserts. These pariahs of the veld were transformed under Khama's rule into happy, contented, pastoral people, and became the most loyal of his subjects.

And so, day after day, month after month, for fifty years, Khama has "carried on." He has been described as one of the busiest men in the world.

Soon after Khama became chief, disaster fell upon the tribe. The harvest failed, through drought, and soon the food supplies gave out. Famine, gaunt and ghastly, stalked through the

“The Black Man’s Burden”

land. Corn reached the fabulous price of £20 a bag. Cattle were sold, sheep and goats were slaughtered. Still on crept the famine. Old women were found in the fields eating grass : some crept away to the caves to die. The dead were left unburied on the veld, till the chief, hearing of it, gave orders for their burial. Khama gave all his hunt to feed the starving, and the traders fed many. Still the sky was as brass, the veld baked like a brick, not a cloud to be seen, the river-bed dry. In the midst of it all, came threatening letters from the Boers. All the ancient fears of the people awoke, all their superstitions flamed out. The wizards demanded a “rain-making.” Makalaka, the rain-maker, appeared in full regalia. “He could cause the clouds to come ! This famine was due to the anger of the Makalaka god, because Khama would not acknowledge him !” Lobengula sent a message, asking that Khama would co-operate in the rain-making ceremonials. Khama replied that he could not see how “a god who ate porridge like himself could be of any use to him.” Day after day, for a week, Khama gathered his people in the khotla, and, led by the missionary, they prayed for rain. Then the rain came, drenching ground-soaking rain, and Makalaka was confounded. It was the last rain-making.

In 1883, news came that the dreaded Matebele were once more upon the war-path, this time directing their attention to the Batuana, at Lake Ngami. Right in their path

Khama

were valuable cattle-posts belonging to the Bamangwato, and Khama felt it necessary to go with a few regiments to protect his property from the marauders, and check any intention they might have of attacking his people. Khamane was left in charge of the town, together with Gogakhosi, a head-man. Hepburn was away in England, on furlough, and thus, left with no restraining influence, Khamane thought he saw one more chance to supplant his brother, and attain his thwarted ambitions. He began by making beer and inviting the old men to come and drink with him. He made it known that if he were chief, all the old heathen practices might return—the Boguera, the Boyali, the charms and smelling-out; the trial by ordeal, and all the paraphernalia of the witch-doctors. Not content with promises, Khamane ordered that all the men should wear the “war-cap”—the plume of feathers worn only by the heathen in time of war. In vain did Ma-Bessie—Khama’s wife—protest. Even Gogakhosi turned “conscientious objector,” and the Christians joined him. In a few weeks it seemed as though all the fabric of civilized sanity which Khama had toiled and suffered to build, was to be swept away.

Meanwhile, the chief was away on the border of his country, holding off the Matebele raiders, who, however, found their hands full with the stout resistance put up by the Batuana, and avoided attacking the powerful Bamangwato. Khama captured a Matebele

“The Black Man’s Burden”

straggler, and the poor wretch, expecting to be killed, was astounded to find himself fed and treated with kindness and then sent back to Lobengula with kindly messages.

Returning to Shoshong, Khama made short work of his rascally brother’s relapse into heathenism. Khamane was sent out of the country, exiled. Slaves who had been captured were set free, with apologies ; the kola, or war-cap, disappeared, and the sorcerers and beer-makers were suppressed.

IN May, 1885, seventy British troopers rode into Shoshong, under the command of Major-General Sir Charles Warren, and the country was formally proclaimed to be a British Protectorate.

Great meetings were held in the crowded khotla, and the representative of the Great White Queen, Victoria, was handed a document which stated Khama's views, and revealed no less his character. Khama's statement expressed his willingness and desire that his country should be under the protection and control of Great Britain, that the English people should come and live in it, and he offered to fight alongside the British in any time of necessity. He, however, definitely required that certain rights should be reserved to him as chief and to his people. He wished not "to be baffled in the government of my own town, or in deciding cases among my own people according to custom." He desired that the tribal laws as then in force should be maintained, especially the law concerning intoxicating drinks, and the law regarding the lands of the Bamangwato unalienable. He offered to hand over a tract of land to the British Government, and said: "I feel that I am speaking to gentlemen of the Government of England. Shall I be afraid that they will

Enter—the British Flag

requite me with Boloi" (witchcraft-deception) ? After many speeches by the head-men and councillors, Sir Charles Warren replied : " I am glad to hear Khama, your chief, speak. Your chief speaks in the interests of his people, as a chief ought to speak. Khama is a true chief." The general is still known among the Bamangwato as " Ra-galase," or Father of Glasses, in reference to his spectacles.

Two years later, trouble broke out with the Baseleka, a small tributary tribe of the Bechuana, who had been allowed to trek over from Boer territory and settle among some rocky fastnesses near the Crocodile River, in Khama's country. These people had allowed a Boer to build a house among their hills, and had insultingly refused to obey Khama's orders to stop it. All other means having failed, Khama was compelled to attack this rebel stronghold. Before doing so, he informed the British Commissioner of his purpose, and asked that representatives should be sent to see that he did nothing contrary to the wishes of the Queen. Captain Bates was sent, with twenty-five of the Border Police, to see fair-play. After a difficult climb, the Bamangwato suddenly appeared upon the summit, and the terrified Baseleka fled. Khama would not permit the fugitives to be fired upon—they were allowed to get safely away. One man, however, was unable to escape. He was Seleka, the old chief, who was blind and helpless. He expected to be put to death at once, but

Khama

explained to Khama that the rebellion was the mad work of his son, whom he had repeatedly warned. "Chief," he said, "I am only a blind old man, and am of no use in war." To his amazement, he was given a wagon and oxen, provided with food and clothing, and sent over to his own people.

From 1886 to 1888 there was conflict with the Boers, who made various attempts to provoke Khama to enter into a quarrel with them and the Matebele over certain mineral concessions, said to have been granted by Lobengula to two English traders, whom Khama had expelled from his country for breaches of the Liquor Law. After much provocation and one or two battles, in which a Boer named Grobler was killed, the British Government intervened, and the matter was satisfactorily settled.

Photo by]

Khanna at a Harvest Thanksgiving

[A. E. Jennings





Photo by]

After fifty years' rule

[*Neville Jones*

SHOSHONG had been the chief's town of the Bamangwato for many years. It had been chosen because it was the only safeguard with such neighbours as the Matebele, but it suffered from one serious drawback—scarcity of water. Khama was wise enough to see that the Protectorate of Britain set him free from the perpetual fear of his ancient foes, and early in 1889 he announced that he had resolved to abandon Shoshong and remove to Phalapye (pronounced Palapshe), nearly 100 miles to the north-east. It is comparatively easy for an African tribe to move in this way, and is a common experience. A Kaffir has no furniture to bother about, and his round hut can soon be substituted by a new one, but it was not such a simple matter for the European missionaries and traders. Houses, schools, churches, and stores all had to be left behind. The chief had first to plan out the new town, and show each head-man where he might settle. The custom is for the chief to live in the centre of the town ; next to him are his nearest relatives and head-men, in order of importance ; and so on till you reach the outer fringe, where live the subject tribes. The great exodus soon began, and went on for months. The people had to trek, many of them on foot, all who could borrow them, in waggons. It

K h a m a

was a three days' journey, and week after week the long lines of women and children passed up the kloof, all with burdens on their heads, and many women with babies strapped to their backs. Slowly the new town took shape, hut after hut was built, village after village was completed, until after six months the tribe was more or less settled in their new home. Phalapye, which had thus arisen out of the bare veld, covered some twenty square miles, and contained about thirty thousand inhabitants. In each of the ten divisions of the town the chief built a large, airy school-room. Later, an enormous church was built, and in this Khama took great interest and to it gave much help. But the erection of the church cost Hepburn his strength, his means, and ultimately his health. In this connection something should be said as to Khama's relations with his missionaries. His treatment of Hepburn, of John Moffat, and others has shown certain defects of his qualities. The man is so remarkable, viewed against the background of his ancestry and surroundings, that it is not to be wondered at that to many casual visitors and distant admirers his virtues have obscured his faults, while many of his detractors (and he has not lacked enemies) may be disregarded, because of mercenary or personal bias. The enmity of some people is his greatest testimonial.

Khama is a man with strong prejudices and dogged will. Once his dignity is slighted, or his authority seems opposed, he is relentless.

Khama Removes His Town

Some of his missionaries, who have toiled and suffered for him and his people, have sooner or later found themselves out of favour with the chief, and then their careers end, so far as Khama is concerned. He is especially resentful of anything that appears like interference with the government of the tribe. An autocratic native chief, whose paramount concern is the well-being of his people, and who feels that this can only be attained through the maintenance of his personal authority, won by years of peril and strife, must, of course, oppose any influences that seem to challenge his supremacy. That is, after all, the major premise of "The Divine Right of Kings," a doctrine not unknown in the history of more civilized communities. The chief sits on a three-legged stool, of which the supports are the Church, the British Government, and the Traders—all more or less extrinsic forces; and it is not surprising to hear it said that he plays one factor off against the others, always in the interests of the tribe. It is never easy anywhere to draw a line between the interests and the functions of Church and State, and peculiarly difficult in a native tribe which owes its higher ideals of rulership to an imported faith taught by men of another race.

Now Hepburn was one of the bravest men and noblest spirits God ever made. Of highly nervous temperament and full of enthusiasm for his work, being more prophet than diplomat, he combined the mystic faith of a St.

Khama

John with the flaming passion of a John the Baptist. After twenty years in Khama's country—and such years!—sharing the adversities and shaping the fortunes of the people, kindling their ideals with incredible patience and more than heroic persistence and unfaltering devotion, he was utterly worn out and nervously overwrought after the great trek to Phalapye. Friction developed between him and Khama. He paid a flying visit to England in 1891, and on his return, Khama refused to see him, and insisted on his leaving the country. Something he had said or done had offended the chief—some error of judgment or speech, obviously due to his state of health. And though Khama still cherished kindly feelings towards his old friend, Hepburn had to go. He left, and died in England, less than two years afterwards, as the result of the malaria which had worn him out.

It would seem that the chief was harsh and even cruel, but he was only applying the rigid principles for which in other matters we praise him. It is not generally known that, when Hepburn left, Khama sent after him a letter full of affectionate appreciation and regret, and a gift of £1,000 as a token of his regard and personal good-will. This money was, in accord with the rules of the L.M.S., sent by Hepburn to the directors.

In the new town, Khama faced the old problems. The aboriginal savagery of the people smouldered beneath their Christian standards, and at times one had but to scratch a deacon to

Khama Removes His Town

find a pagan. In November, 1899, Ma-Bessie, Khama's wife, died. His eldest daughter, Bessie, acted as his housekeeper for some time, until, about a year later, Khama married Gasekete, daughter of one chief and widow of another. Unhappily she also died eighteen months after the marriage. His present wife is Semane, a fine Christian woman, trained in the L.M.S. school, and it has been suggested that it is possible that their young son may be designated to the chieftainship. In that contingency there will assuredly be a split in the tribe, but more recent developments point to the probable succession of the heir, who bears the name of Sekhome.

The Christian character of his home life has been not the least of the benefits which Khama has conferred on his people.

The following details of Khama's domestic concerns will be of interest, and are supplied by the Rev. Haydon Lewis.

The chief has had three wives during his lifetime.

(1.) Mogatsamocwasele—(better, and certainly more easily, known as Ma-Bessie), whose children were Bessy, Babonye, Sekhome (the heir), Pidio, Mmakgama, Milly, Tumelo.

(2.) Gasekete, whose only child died in infancy.

(3.) Semane, his present wife, of whom were born Bonyerily, a girl, and Tsckedi, a boy. There were also twins, who died.

In 1892 came the Matebele war, and Khama was asked by the British Government to assist

Khama

in wiping out that long reign of tryanny and blood. He was asked to send 1,000 men, but sent 2,500, and at Imbandine they fought and repulsed the Matebele.

The report was spread at the time that Khama's men had retired before they were ordered to do so. Upon enquiry, however, it was found that he had more than fulfilled his obligations, and then finding that smallpox was breaking out amongst his troops, and that their crop-sowing was overdue, he allowed them to return.

THE end of the Matebele terror and the death of Lobengula marked the beginning of a new era. The Chartered Company was slowly but surely gaining vast power in Mashonaland and Matebeleland ; envious eyes were cast at Khama's territory, which was a Naboth's vineyard, lying in the direct line of traffic to the north ; and the designs of the Empire-makers and shareholders threatened to extinguish Khama as effectively as they had Lobengula. A sidelight is thrown upon the methods and dreams of what was then called "Imperialism," by an extract from a letter written in 1892 by John Smith Moffat, who was then Assistant Commissioner in northern Bechuanaland. He wrote—"I find in the Protectorate that it is a regular grapple with the drink-selling interest. I am determined to stand by Khama. He has kept drink out of his country hitherto, and it will be a shame if, now that we in a measure take his affairs into our hands, we allow it to come in. I have refused all applications for licenses, and have made the grog-sellers my enemies in consequence." He further refers to attempts, first to hoodwink Khama, and then to bully him, by official communications, and adds, "they won't bully Khama, who can be as stubborn as a mule."

At last definite proposals were made by

Khama

Rhodes that the southern portion of the Protectorate should be annexed by the Cape Colony, and that Khama's country should be handed over to the Chartered Company. There were doubtless financial as well as political reasons for this project, but Khama had moral and political reasons for resisting it. Whatever may have been the intentions of the Chartered Company, no one who knew their attitude to the natives would accuse them of being negro-phile, and Mackenzie, in an article in the "Contemporary Review" at this time, boldly said that their "native policy was entirely at variance with what is generally known as British native policy."

So Khama, and the other chiefs involved in the matter, decided to "appeal to Cæsar." In 1895, accompanied by Bathoeng, Chief of the Bangweketsi, and Sebele, chief of the Bakwena, and under the guidance of the Rev. W. C. Willoughby and the Rev. E. Lloyd, Khama came to England, to place his case before the British Government.

In an interview with Mr. Chamberlain, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, the chiefs made the following requests :—

(1.) That our lands may not be taken from us and given to the Chartered Company, or anyone else. We wish to be ruled by our Mother the Queen only.

(2.) That we may retain our own form of native government for our own people . . . and

Khama Visits England

that subject chiefs living in our country shall not be allowed to make mischief.

(3.) That we may be allowed to hunt the game . . . in our own country.

(4.) That strong drink shall not be sold in our country to either white people or black people.

It was a striking and suggestive situation—three black chiefs, representing what an “Imperialist” poet would call “the lesser breeds without the Law,” opposing their dim perceptions of Right and Justice to the combined forces of modern civilization, and daring not to fall down and worship the White Man’s fetish called Progress. Against them were the map-makers, with their red paint-brush; the speculators, with their share-scrip; the party politicians, with their place-hunting opportunism; and the Man in the Street, with colossal and complacent ignorance of the whole business.

The chiefs were well received wherever they went. Their picturesque personalities appealed to the imagination, even where they did not challenge the conscience, of the British people. Their case was greatly helped by Mackenzie’s article, and by the advocacy of W. T. Stead in the “Review of Reviews.”

In interviews with the representatives of the Chartered Company, it was found that the Company were willing to concede to the wishes of the chiefs on practically all points. So far as Rhodes himself was concerned, there would have been no difficulty in prohibiting drink, or

Khama

in the retention of native forms of government. But the chiefs were determined not to come under the rule of the Chartered Company. They insisted on remaining "children of the Queen." In the end they won. In November, 1895, Mr. Chamberlain gave his decision, which provided that a strip of territory on Khama's eastern border, not exceeding ten miles in width, was to be handed over to the Company for the purpose of building the railway to the north; and similar concessions were to be made by the other chiefs. But the chiefs were to live, as heretofore, under the protection of the Queen, and were to rule their people as hitherto. "White man's strong drink," wrote Mr. Chamberlain, "shall not be brought for sale into the country now assigned to the chiefs, and those who attempt to deal in it or to give it away to black men will be punished." Boundaries were carefully defined, and a close season for hunting required.

This decision was accepted by the chiefs, and still stands.

TO take a Kaffir chief from his kraal on the verge of the primeval desert ; plunge him into the whirl of a civilization foreign to all his modes of life and thought ; drag him through a giddy round of public functions and meetings at which he is treated sometimes with obsequious flattery and sometimes with almost contemptuous curiosity ; is a dangerous experiment. It says much for Khama's force of character that he was not " spoiled " and that he did not copy that vice most abhorred by the White man in the Black, which he describes as " swelled head." Many amusing stories are still told of the quaint remarks and aboriginal simplicities of native etiquette by which Khama is remembered in the homes in which he was a guest in England. But his innate courtesy of manner and quiet dignity impressed all who met him.

Once more installed in his khotla, he found himself faced by anxiety and disaster. The year after his return, rinderpest broke out in his country, and swept away the cattle. The chief lost about 800,000 head of cattle, and for a time he and his tribe were impoverished. But his satisfaction at having been able to secure the direct government of Britain, rather than the dominance of Colonial or Chartered Company rule, was all the greater because

Kha ma

of the treatment meted out to two small tribes who were concerned in what was called the Langberg Rebellion in 1897. The opinion was strongly held at the time that the trouble was provoked by the high-handed action and stupid blundering of the authorities. Certain natives on the Phokwane Reserve resisted the enforcement of the rinderpest regulations, and hostilities broke out. The rebels took refuge in the Langberg Hills, and the punitive measures that were taken made no discrimination between the real offenders and two kindred tribes amongst whom they sought refuge. After a protracted struggle, Luka Jantji, a chief, was killed, and the Cape newspapers reported certain circumstances of peculiar atrocity which had better be forgotten. The survivors surrendered, and then the Cape Government confiscated the whole tract of their country ; a few of the ringleaders were tried and sentenced, while the remainder, men, women, and children, were transported to Cape Town, placed in a location, and finally "indentured" to farmers in the Cape Colony. There were nearly 1,900 people thus distributed, and this shameful action took place under the British flag, in spite of the protests of a few who bravely exposed the hypocrisy and disgrace of the proceeding.

The effect of this upon the native mind was obvious, and the chiefs who had resisted annexation felt themselves justified. The unfortunate thing is that it need not have

Rinderpest and Drink

been. Wise handling, just rule, and patient understanding might have secured the gradual supersession of the tribal chiefs, and the loyal acceptance by the natives of a more enlightened and more civilized government by absorption.

But the die was cast. Khama had secured for his land and tribe a pledge of protection from the Colonial Office, and remains still outside the Union of South Africa.

It must not be imagined that the promulgation of his drastic laws against drink, witchcraft, polygamy, and other native customs, was immediately and completely effective. Even under despotic monarchies, there is a limit beyond which repressive legislation not only fails to secure obedience, but provokes resistance. The power of the chief waxed and waned; ancient prejudices and savage tendencies were always tenaciously alive below the surface. There were always some in the tribe who sought to re-establish the old customs, and there were always a few unscrupulous white men who, regarding Khama as a fanatic, secretly undermined his authority. The enforcement of the law against the making of Kaffir beer was, and still is, difficult. Ever since he became chief, Khama has persistently fought this thing. It has been like an obsession in his mind, and he has pursued his purpose with unwavering determination. The intensity of his conviction is shown by the letter which he wrote to Sir Sydney Shepherd

Khama

in 1888. "I fear Lobengula" he said "less than I fear brandy. I fought Lobengula . . . and drove him back, and he never came again. . . But to fight against drink is to fight against demons, and not against men. I dread the white man's drink more than all the assegais of the Matebele . . . I pray your Honour never to ask me to open even a little door to the drink."

For fifty years he has held to that attitude, and only those who know what drink has meant to the African natives can appreciate his reasons. From time to time he relaxed the order against Kaffir beer, once allowing it to be used by men over forty years of age. But finding that this "little door" was letting in a flood of evil influence, he called his young men together in 1911, and issued a final order against it.

It should be noted that Khama is not the only African chief who has taken up this attitude against the drink evil, though he stands alone in the persistency with which he has carried out his convictions. Even old Sekhome realized the danger of Kaffir beer, and seldom touched it himself, nor would he allow his sons to drink it. He was especially opposed to the use of "khadi," or honey-beer.

Khama's influence and example spread far beyond the borders of his own tribe. M. Coillard found its effects amongst the people of Barotsiland, on the Zambezi. He says: "If there is one man living to whom Barotsi-

Rinderpest and Drink

land owes both the Gospel and a good government, that man is the chief Khama." It is interesting to trace how this came about. On one occasion, Lewanika, chief of the Barotsi, sent a letter asking for Khama's daughter and a black dog, as a token of his friendship. Khama replied by sending a horse instead of his daughter, and giving Lewanika to understand that he must join with him, not against the white man, but against the white man's drink, if he wished to be Khama's friend. At that time the Zambezi tribes were living in the deepest depths of savagery and degradation. Drinking went on all day and all night ; after 9 a.m. it was rare to find anyone sober. Lewanika, who had been faced with anarchy in the tribe, gradually recovered his power, and proceeded to put Khama's advice into practice in a very drastic way. Indeed, the French missionaries thought he was going too far, and that he would never be able to enforce his prohibitory laws. He forbade slavery and sorcery, and proclaimed severe penalties against the manufacture and sale of Kaffir beer. He himself set the example, and his leading head-men followed it. The result was that for years a drunken man or woman was never seen out of doors. His Prime Minister, another official, and four head-men, were found guilty of carrying on a beer club. They, with all their pots of beer, were brought into the khotla, and, before the assembled tribe, were ordered to pour the beer away on the thirsty sand. They

K h a m a

were then stripped of everything they possessed ; wives, children, slaves, clothes, ornaments, official decorations, and titles, and even their manhood names, and so, reverting to the names of their childhood, they were exiled from the capital for life. This was prohibition with a vengeance. But it indicates that it may be possible to make people sober by law ! Khama's zeal, however, never went to that length. It is, nevertheless, a striking sidelight upon the way in which Khama has indirectly shaped the policies and influenced the life of tribes far beyond his immediate territory.

IT will be remembered that in 1889 Khama had removed his capital to Phalapye. This involved a great upheaval, and the building of churches and schools, as well as native huts to accommodate over 20,000 people. Almost from the first Phalapye was found not to be an ideal place for a native town, and as the years went by, difficulties seemed to increase with regard to sanitation and water. The sanitary system of all native towns is necessarily primitive, and though civilization may bring the telegraph, as it did to Phalapye in 1890, such details as drainage are beyond the range of the native mind. So long as the Matebele menace had remained, considerations of defence determined the site of a town, but now that peace was secure, through the suppression of inter-tribal wars and the assurance of British protection, the nomadic instincts of the people asserted their power. Apart from other reasons, Khama felt no sentimental attachment to Phalapye. He had found sorrow and trouble there, and his people had suffered from epidemics of disease. The water supply, though plentiful at first, soon became insufficient for such a large population, and was not good.

In 1902, therefore, Khama applied to the High Commissioner for permission to remove his capital to Serowe, some forty-five miles

Khama

away. After careful enquiry and approval, this decision was duly announced, and again the tribe trekked across the veld to its new home, which has been its capital ever since.

Serowe was an ancient capital of the tribe, and it was here Khama found refuge when Sekhome and Khamane had made his position impossible in Shoshong.

The laying-out of the new town and the selection of sites for the chief buildings were carried out by Khama, with the advice and assistance of his missionary, the Rev. W. C. Willoughby, to whose wise statesmanship and untiring energy the tribe will be for ever indebted. The removal from Phalapye was completed in due course, but more slowly than the previous exodus from Shoshong. Mr. Willoughby was faced with the problem of the church buildings at Phalapye, which had been erected at great cost of money and labour. It was hoped that they might have been utilised in connection with a scheme for the founding of a Native Training Institution, which had been long felt to be necessary. Khama personally was sympathetic with the plan, and was willing to give title to the land during his life-time, but for such an undertaking a more secure tenure was necessary, and this was not conceded by the head-men of the tribe. They would not "give away" any more of their land. Consequently the Institution came to be built at Tiger Kloof, and the great buildings at Phalapye were left.

Removal to Serowe

The opening of the new stone church at Serowe in 1914 was a great event in the life of the tribe. The people raised between £7,000 and £8,000 to meet the cost. Into the details of the controversy which took place at that time it is unprofitable to enter; it must, however, be put on record that when the building, which had been erected by contract, was found to be insecure, the Directors of the Missionary Society agreed to the Masonry Department at Tiger Kloof Native Institution sending students to Serowe for six months to remedy the defects: otherwise the building would probably have collapsed. The young men trained at Tiger Kloof set to work under their instructor and built supports which saved the church. Khama is proud of the church, and it figures on his tribal flag, while it stands as a memorial of his influence as a Christian chief. In 1916, Khama was kicked on the knee by a horse, and was seriously ill for seven months. At one time his life was despaired of, but eventually expert surgical advice was secured, and an operation performed by Dr. Ashe, of Kimberley, which was completely successful. Khama vowed that he would ride the horse that had caused the trouble, but before he was able to attempt riding again, the horse had died. The chief has always been an expert horseman, and, though over ninety, will still ride thirty miles in a day, returning the same distance next morning.

Recent years in Serowe have been clouded

Khama

by an estrangement between Khama and his son and heir Sekhome ; and since this has been made public, it is necessary in justice to Khama to state the facts. The trouble began when Khama was in England in 1895. On his return he found his authority undermined, and another chief in virtual authority through the influence which he had gained over Sekhome. The difficulty of governing under such conditions became so great that in 1898 Sekhome removed to the border, and it was not till 1920 he became reconciled to his father. During recent years both within the tribes and without, Khama has met with strong opposition. There are some who have never forgiven his departure from the old tribal customs ; others are discontented because of his suppression of the drink traffic ; and making common cause with these, there are others to whom the ideals of Khama are unwelcome.

The Bamangwato have been lifted out of savagery through the devoted labours of the missionaries of the London Missionary Society, which has been the only Christian organization at work amongst them during Khama's reign. The policy of the Society is that of a broad and sane evangelism, and its aim is not to make sectarians of any particular type, but to teach the great evangelical truths common to all branches of the Christian Church. Khama saw, as all sensible men must see, that to introduce the rivalries of warring sects amongst his people would only lead to

Removal to Serowe

confusion and strife. Sectarian divisions have caused so much mischief amongst white Christians that it seems incredible that any should wish to impose its alien bitternesses amongst the heathen, especially while there are millions of other natives still unevangelized. It would appear, however, that there have been some who have not scrupled to depreciate Khama's character and belittle the Bamangwato Church, because they do not conform to their own ecclesiastical fold.

Sekhome and his recalcitrant supporters had been a rallying point for these various antagonistic parties, and much relief was felt when it was announced, in 1920, that the young chief had returned to Serowe, and professed repentance. Sekhome has stated that he intends to follow his father's policy with regard to drink and heathen customs, but the sheer strength of will and power of personality which have made Khama great have not yet been manifest in Sekhome. When it is remembered how much an African Chief means to his tribe, even in lands under the British rule, it will be in the hearts of those who love their country to pray that when the new chieftain enters upon his inheritance, he may be loyal to the faith of his father.

One thing is certain, and of this Khama himself is fully aware—that at the death of the old chief there may be great changes.

So far Khama has been happy to know that the compact with the British Colonial

Khama

Office has secured the Bechuanaland Protectorate from Chartered Company rule and Cape Colonial dominance. The alternative may present itself of incorporation into the Union of South Africa. But if the country becomes open to a horde of self-seeking speculators it is very desirable that control, whether it is exercised from London or Pretoria, should endeavour to prevent the exploitation of the people who have for so long been protected by the character of their Chief.

Already attempts are being made to influence public opinion in England and prepare the way for certain developments. A series of articles appeared in a Johannesburg newspaper in 1914, in which an anonymous contributor professed to tell "The Truth about Khama," and which were full of malicious half-truths and deliberate misrepresentations. The authorship of these attacks can be easily guessed, and the statements were ably refuted at the time by the Rev. Albert Jennings, who had been Khama's missionary for some years. Much capital has been made of the fact that Khama owned or had a controlling interest in certain stores, which it was said had monopolised trade to the detriment of European traders. The manager of a certain trading concern in Bechuanaland had given much trouble to the chief, and constant complaints reached Khama of drink having been supplied to the natives. After much exasperation and enquiry, Khama announced that he would

Removal to Serowe

refuse to have any business dealings with this Company so long as this manager remained. The tribe, to a man, took the same attitude, and the stores were boycotted. Whereupon the Company accused Khama of intimidation, and claimed enormous damages. A Government Commissioner was appointed, and the report of his enquiry is available to all who care to read it. Khama has withdrawn from his share in his own stores, having made little or nothing out of it,

While this book was going through the press, cabled reports appeared in the London press, referring to certain alleged "Rhodesian Massacres," and accusing Khama of complicity in cruel treatment of some of his subject people. The events referred to took place in 1920, and were officially investigated by Sir Herbert Sloley, K.C.M.G., who represented the High Commissioner of South Africa. The full report is published in an Official Gazette (No. 1083), and completely exonerates the chief.

When Khama was in England in 1895, he ceded a strip of his territory to the British South African Company, for the purposes of the Cape to Cairo Railway. This was insisted upon in the terms of settlement proposed by Mr. Chamberlain, and it was required that the natives living in that strip should be removed by Khama, "if and when the B.S.A. Company called upon him to do so." The people concerned were left undisturbed for twenty-five years. Then, in 1920,

Khama

the Resident Commissioner, acting for the B.S.A. Company, informed Khama that the time had come to carry out the agreement, and called upon him to have these natives removed to some spot within his own territory. The natives, a tribe called the Maberwa, refused to move, and Khama sent a head-man, called Modisa-o-Tsile, with a "regiment" of men, to carry out the order. Waggonns were sent to assist the people to move. Modisa-o-Tsile appears to have carried out his unpleasant task in accord with native customs, and huts were burned and cattle stolen. The Commissioner, after three days' enquiry, at which Malema, the complaining chief, was present, and many witnesses were examined, reported that "Khama was exonerated from all blame," and added that "no evidence of atrocities was produced." Further, he makes the significant remark that "it is remarkable that these atrocities, which were supposed to have taken place in 1920 and 1921, were not reported to the Government, nor alluded to in the evidence recorded."

"Never strike sail to Fear ; come grandly into port, or sail with God the seas."

EMERSON.

AFTER a life so full of conflict and high endeavour, one might have hoped to find its closing years lit with the radiant glow of peaceful triumph, but this brave old warrior carries his sword untarnished and still unsheathed to the end.

There is something grandly pathetic in the figure of this man, away on the frontiers of civilization, fighting with his back to the wall, striving desperately for what he conceives to be the Christian standards of life, and battling against those who are supposed to represent those ideals in the name of what they call Civilization. Holding the devoted loyalty of most of his people as indeed no other African chief has ever done ; simple and unswerving in his religious faith ; dominated by one master passion, the welfare of his tribe ; he watches the slow onswEEP of forces which he regards as a menace to the uplift of his people and a weakening of his influence over them.

No living African has so completely vindicated the potentialities of the Bantu race, or won so high a place in the aristocracy of character. True, he escapes the woe pronounced upon those of whom all speak well, and he has

Khama

enemies and detractors. That is an added testimony to his character. But tributes to his greatness come from the most unexpected quarters. In "The Diary of a Soldier of Fortune," by Stanley Portal Hyatt, the author shows his aversion to missionaries and their work, and his contempt for the native people, of whom he speaks with the characteristic arrogance of the white globe-trotter. And yet he says "Khama is a native statesman and a black gentleman . . . I admire him as much as I detest his people . . . I have no love for missionaries, and even less for native Christians, but the greatness of Khama goes far towards redeeming the faults of all the others." Now at the end of his days, Khama stands upon his Pisgah and sees the Land he may not enter, and, alas ! knows no Joshua likely to carry on his leadership. To-day, as fifty years ago, he finds that "the price of peace is eternal vigilance," and he is faced by the old, old foes of drink, of heathenism, and family intrigue, with the added confusions of plausible and intolerant sectarianism. The outlook is not cheering, for there are indications of upheaval and change on every hand. The Bamangwato Church will have to pass through the fire of persecution when the sheltering support of their old chief is gone and the long-suppressed forces of heathenism break out anew. The prestige and influence of the chief has been a great help, but in some degree has tended to retard the development of independent con-

"I was Ever a Fighter, so . . ."

viction and personal sacrifice for their faith. It has been a State Church, with all the advantages and all the perils of such patronage. But for all that, it stands as a well in the desert and a miracle in the earth. From that Church, where the chief leads his people to prayer, and where true Christian characters have been formed, there spreads out into the wastes a stream of influence that makes for healing and light. For many years the Bamangwato have sustained their own mission work at Lake Ngami and numerous little stations in other lonely outposts. To his people the chief is Father and Friend as well as Ruler. There are no Almshouses, no Poor Law, but Khama has bound his people to him by his ready and generous help, always given to the poor and needy. His charity is always unostentatious, and few know of its extent. He has been known to pay doctors' bills amounting to £40 and £50 on behalf of sick people who were unable to pay for themselves. When Europeans living in his town have been in distress or need, sometimes through their own fault, he has quietly paid the money needed, as he cannot bear to see a white man's prestige lowered before the black.

Of the future none can prophesy. South Africa is approaching one of the greatest and most perplexing crises in modern times. The native problem is rapidly reaching a critical phase which will tax the patience and demand the statesmanship of the wisest. Slowly the native

Khama

peoples are rising from the depths of savagery and the darkness of ignorance into self-consciousness and race-consciousness. A new nation is coming to the birth, and coming into a world that is moved by mighty currents of thought and resistless tides of democratic impulse. The South African natives, under the dominance of white ideals, are rapidly increasing in numbers. Dudley Kidd says, in his "Kaffir Socialism," that the native population of Natal has increased seventy-five fold in seventy years —from about 10,000 in 1838 to 700,000 in 1906. The natives have an unconquerable vitality, and the blacks are increasing twice as fast as the whites. All the checks such as war and famine and pestilence, which formerly kept the population down, have been removed or diminished. Not only so; they are rising in the human scale. Education and the influences of civilized life are producing new types, new interests, and new demands. They are beginning to assert the implications of the Christian faith that has been taught to them, and to act upon the affirmations of their new beliefs. A vast Empire is coming into being, and becoming articulate and impatient. The various tribes, once held apart by immemorial antagonisms, are discovering their unities and their common interests and power. "Ethiopianism" is more than a movement, it is a symptom, and these movements are the indirect outcome of the work of men like Moffat, and Hepburn, and Stewart, and Mackenzie.

"I was Ever a Fighter, so . . ."

Had the white races wanted to keep the blacks in perpetual servitude or inferiority, they should never have sent them the Gospel. "The egg is being hatched," and the old barriers of race are being swept away.

Here and there men are discouraged at the slowness of the progress. But what are fifty years in the life of a nation?

And the future depends upon the spirit of government and the wise handling of these explosive racial elements. Civilization this adolescent race will surely have, but if in the getting of it they do not also get Christianity, they will fall into depths lower than the heathenism from which they are emerging. This is what makes the life of Khama profoundly significant. He has shown the world what potentialities are hidden under the black skins and behind the inscrutable faces of the natives. He stands before us to vindicate the divine manhood which comes to birth under the power of the Christian faith. He is a Kaffir and a Man. And once more in the history of the race he has shown that a Man is still a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest—a great rock in a weary land to break the drift of the ages, under whose shelter human life springs into fruitfulness and beauty.

POSTSCRIPT

ON July 24th, 1922, the Bamangwato tribe celebrated the Jubilee of the reign of their Chief Khama. The proceedings, which occupied several days, culminated in a great Assembly of the tribe in the Khotla at Serowe, the regiments dressed in modern military costume, paraded for their Chief's honour. There were speeches by the Resident Magistrate, on behalf of the Government, by the representatives of the London Missionary Society, and by a local trader standing for the white population. One of the Headmen presented an address, extolling the Chief's work under the Missionaries, and declaring that he had driven out heathenism, abolished the circumcision rites, and conquered drink.

Then in an intense silence the old Chief spoke. Through his lips History uttered its verdict, and the Future made its appeal. Here are fragments of this historic speech, which will long be remembered as "The Words of Khama."

"I have not many words to say, but I have a word of joy and thanksgiving. First to the King, because of his goodness to me and to my people. I remain a child of the King. I thank God for the Missionaries. They brought us the Light and showed us the Road. I am thankful, too, for the presence of the Whites, and pray that we may be one in heart and that there may be unity between us.

Postscript

I am an old man, and to the young men I say : 'Let these words enter your hearts. The work that has been done here is a work of God. Depart from disputes ; think like men ; seek to know the Way ; let your hearts depart from drink and from the heathen ceremonies. May God bless you, white people, and my people.'"

When Khama ceased there was a significant happening. An old man leaped to his feet, and broke into a torrent of eloquence in praise of the Chief, just as he, perhaps, had heard men speak of Sekhoma long ago. Ancient custom struggled to find articulate intrusion into a celebration suffused with a spirit of solemn worship. But it fell flat, it was archaic, and the people looked at the man in astonishment. They could not understand him. Slowly the Chief with a smile of amusement turned away, and the people left the orator unheeded. . . . They had outgrown that. The Dead past was left to bury its dead. The Chief and his people have their eyes fixed upon the life of to-day and to-morrow.

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February, 1923.

This narrative, written in 1922, is in the present tense, and remains so in this edition. But the earthly story of Khama is ended now. On February 21st, 1923, the Chief died at his capital, Serowe, while at prayer with his missionary in the early morning. He has finished his course ; he has kept the faith.

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